



**Female Fat Loss Over Forty**  
**Get Your ZZZ's**

### Sleep – The Missing Link?

If you're like most women, you're burning the candle at both ends. Often you will short change sleep to get everything done. This is one of the most common errors made and will contribute to weight gain or inhibit weight loss. When you don't get your required sleep, seven to eight hours every night, your body will lack the normal amounts of serotonin and dopamine. You will crave carbohydrates, specifically sugar and caffeine for some energy. This is also a way for your body to replace the lack of serotonin and dopamine. By ingesting carbohydrates you will get a temporary energy boost. Often sugar is accompanied by caffeine for a 'pick me up'. This can also contribute to poor sleeping patterns. Lack of sleep throws your whole system off. It will increase your body's level of a protein called NPY, or Neuropeptide Y. This protein will decrease metabolism and increase appetite.

All in all, it's worth it to get your rest. Not only do you feel more energetic and optimistic, but it allows your body to function more effectively to burn calories and excess fat that you want to rid yourself of.

So how do you go about getting the required rest? Read on for 16 ways to improve your sleep:

1. Develop a bedtime routine. Try to get into the habit of settling down each night with a simple routine. This may include a bath or reading in bed for a short time. This will help you relax and fall asleep faster.
2. Go to bed earlier. Even if you can't sleep right away, it will help you relax.
3. Regular exercise can help improve sleep.
4. Early morning exercise can also help make it easier to fall asleep at night. Try to avoid exercise three to four hours before bed. However, if this is the only time you have available to exercise, once your body becomes accustomed to this routine, you will reap the benefits of the exercise while still sleeping

- soundly.
5. Reduce caffeine intake. Limit intake to 1-2 cups of coffee daily and try to avoid caffeine four hours before bed. Remember that caffeine is present in many forms, not just coffee.
  6. Maintain a regular schedule, even on the weekends. Try not to oversleep as this can actually make you feel more tired in the end.
  7. Drink alcohol in moderation. Alcohol can aid in falling asleep, but you will usually wake up in the middle of the night. Limit intake and avoid it a few hours prior to bed.
  8. Watch the temperature. A room temperature between 60-70F is best for most.
  9. Maintain a healthy diet with regular meals and snacks. If you have lots of energy through out the day with few lows caused by low blood sugar, you will feel more able to settle down and rest at night.
  10. Don't eat a heavy meal before bed. This can cause indigestion and heartburn.
  11. Reduce stress as much as possible. Different techniques help different people, but find something to do everyday that works for *you*. This could be exercise, yoga, meditation, journaling, what ever works. If you don't find relief right away, keep at it, stress reduction is a learned behavior.
  12. Turn your clock away from you and stop staring at it if sleep doesn't come to you. Get your book out or write down a 'to do' list if it's keeping you awake. Then try again.
  13. Try not to nap longer than 20 minutes during the day if you do decide to nap.
  14. Add some 'white noise' to help drown out any other noise. A fan or CD recording of rain falling can help you relax.

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15. Check all your medications to see if they have any adverse effects on sleep. Ask your doctor for an alternative if necessary.
16. Get a check-up. If you toss and turn most nights, it may be time to seek medical attention. There are sleep disorders (sleep apnea or insomnia) that you may be suffering from. If you've tried all the above tips and you are still not sleeping well, your doctor may be able to help.