

You're having trouble sleeping at night and you have come across this article. Read the article and choose the best answer (a, b or c) according to the text.

## IS YOUR DAY RUINING YOUR NIGHT'S SLEEP?

If you've mastered the art of "sleep hygiene" at bedtime - drawing the black-out blinds, having a hot bath, meditating for 10 minutes and yet, you're still overwhelmed by sleepless nights, a new book suggests there may be a little more to it.

Dr Nerina Ramlakhan is a physiologist who has worked with people with sleep problems for two decades and runs the sleep, energy and health programmes at the Nightingale Psychiatric Hospital in London.

Having worked with countless stressed and sleep-deprived professionals, Dr Ramlakhan has concluded that much of how we sleep at night is governed by our daytime behaviour.

### YOU THINK LIKE AN INSOMNIAC

People with sleep issues often hold unhelpful beliefs about sleep. For example, during the day they tell themselves how important it is that they sleep that night or their performance the next day will suffer. At bedtime, this puts them in a state of anxiety and high alert in which stress hormones such as cortisol are released, making sleep less likely. Other unhelpful ideas include believing that you shouldn't wake up during the night, needing to know the time if you do, and thinking anything less than seven or eight hours is sleep failure.

**Do this instead:** Relax your sleep perfectionism and you'll relax your mind into sleeping better. Stop worrying about not having slept well or even waking up at night - studies show the average adult wakes ten times a night. Turn your alarm clock away from you so that you don't see the time the instant your eyes are open. If you do wake at night, lie there and focus on resting and feeling cosy instead of telling yourself your day will be a disaster - it won't. Moreover, in that relaxed state you're far more likely to fall back into sleep.

### YOU'RE SKIPPING MEALS

Sleep-friendly days start the minute you wake up. Failing to eat breakfast affects your blood sugar control, putting you into a "survival" state in which your sympathetic nervous system (the part of the brain that deals with high-stress situations) is in overdrive. But to relax, you need to be in a "safety" state for most of the time, one where your parasympathetic nervous system (the part of the brain responsible for relaxation and de-stressing) is active. By not eating breakfast and **heading** straight **for** emails, social media or other stressful tasks, your body starts to run on stress hormones instead of nourishing food, which makes you more anxious and fearful through the day (and can even increase your risk of depression in the longer term). The result of this is that at night, your system thinks it's unsafe to produce melatonin, the essential sleep hormone.

**Do this instead:** Eat breakfast within 30-45 minutes of rising and make sure it's a combination of carbohydrate, protein and fat, for example, a boiled egg on rye toast with butter. If you can't stomach a meal, eight almonds and two dates will stabilise your blood sugar, but make sure you eat something substantial in the next two hours. Keeping your blood sugar stable for the rest of the day will keep your body in safety mode. You can do that by eating every few hours (avoiding sugary snacks). If you tend towards waking suddenly in the small hours, try a snack before bed, such as two oat cakes with hummus or cottage cheese or a rice cake with a pat of butter (the fat helps settle blood sugar).

### YOU'RE HAVING TOO MUCH BLUE LIGHT

We all know that electronic devices are a no-no at night, because they emit blue light, but you should watch your screen time during the day, too. When you surf the net or check emails the "reward" chemical dopamine is produced, which makes you alert and switched on. Moreover, the blue light suppresses the production of melatonin from the brain. Cells in the hypothalamus then secrete more dopamine, which further wakes you up, telling you it's time for action. The more you do this during the day, the more your sympathetic nervous system is stimulated, telling the body to stay alert.

**Do this instead:** Our energy runs in 60-90 minute cycles so take blue light breaks every 60-90 minutes, ideally outdoors, which will switch your brain back to "safety" mode. Have an electronic "sundown" in which you try and avoid screens of any kind before bed for an hour, perhaps reading a book (ideally on hard copy), and sleep in a tech-free bedroom environment without phones, laptop or tablets.

Adapted from © *The Telegraph, London*

1. A lack of sleep
  - a. is due to not having a routine.
  - b. may be caused by how we function during the day.
  - c. won't happen if you have sleep hygiene.
  
2. People having trouble to sleep often think that
  - a. if they perform well during the day, they'll sleep enough at night.
  - b. it is best not to look at the time when you wake up.
  - c. they must sleep seven or eight hours.
  
3. We are advised
  - a. not to be anxious about sleep quality.
  - b. not to think about tomorrow.
  - c. to switch off the alarm clock.
  
4. If we don't have breakfast,
  - a. stress hormones will be released at night.
  - b. the hormones produced will affect melatonin secretion.
  - c. the sleep hormone will be produced in the morning.
  
5. The meaning of '**heading for**' in the text is
  - a. being at the front of something.
  - b. being in charge of something.
  - c. going in a particular direction.
  
6. The article says that electronic devices
  - a. have a blue light on.
  - b. prevent the production of dopamine.
  - c. should be controlled during daytime.
  
7. It is suggested that we should
  - a. not use devices an hour before bedtime.
  - b. read a hardback in bed.
  - c. turn off our devices roughly every hour.

(key<sup>1</sup>)

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<sup>1</sup> 1. b    2. c    3. a    4. b    5. c    6. c    7. a