**Sleeping Beauty**

*“Sleep is the golden thread that ties health and our bodies together.”* – Thomas Decker

**The Benefits**

Sleep is an engine extraordinaire and personal off button, all at once. It not only reboots our brain, helping us process and store our human experiences (keeping us sharp!), it also repairs our cells, organs, and muscles; boosts our mood, *and* transports us into wild-groovy-dream land, tapping into our deep unconscious. All this while we’re lying horizontal.

While some of you fortunate mortals are blessed with 8 hours of peaceful, unbroken sleep, many *still* struggle to fall into a deep slumber. For those who sleep eludes, this article will hopefully be helpful!

**Sleep Cycles**

Even super sleepers don’t experience sleep as a long, continuous stretch — more like a series of mini episodes. Throughout the night, your body goes through 4 to 6 sleep cycles lasting around 90 minutes. Each cycle is made up of four stages:

**Stage 1** – Light sleep, drifting in and out of consciousness.

**Stage 2** – Deeper sleep with slower brain waves and muscle relaxation.

**Stage 3** – Deep, restorative sleep for physical healing.

**REM Sleep** – Rapid eye movement sleep with vivid dreams. When we process emotions and memories.

**Night Owls**

In a large-scale study on sleep behavior from 2024, Stanford scientists found that night owls don't really thrive late at night. Following your inclination to stay awake until the wee hours can wreak havoc on your mental health. So let’s try and shift that for you, shall we?

**Tracking Your Sleep**

The best way to improve your sleep? Be your own detective. By tracking your sleep over two weeks, you can crack the case of sleepless nights, finding a new routine for sweet, uninterrupted slumber.

**Sleep Journal** – While jotting down your spells of sleeping and waking — and how you feel after rest — might seem annoying, it’s the best way to identify patterns so you can address what’s not working.

**Sleep Tracker Apps** – Have a smart phone? Download the [Sleepscore](https://www.sleepscore.com/sleepscore-app/) app to log your zzz’s automatically.

**Fitness Trackers** – She ain’t cheap but the [Oura Ring Gen3](https://www.nytimes.com/wirecutter/reviews/best-sleep-trackers/) gets great reviews.

**Smart Mattresses** – Yes, there are even [beds](https://www.sleepnumber.com/categories/mattresses) with built-in sensors to track your sleep.

**Antagonists of Sleep**

For those of us with chronic pain, an overactive brain, sleep apnea, or prescription meds that make us feel wired — sleep can be an ongoing challenge. Counting sheep and chamomile tea doesn’t quite cut it for insomniacs! So let’s talk real solutions:

* **Trazodone or Ambien**  (by prescription) both work wonders, just don’t take them together.
* **Guided Meditation**  free on YouTube or download the [Calm app](https://www.calm.com/ua-homepage-v2?pid=googleadwords_int&af_channel=googlesem&af_c_id=14668023573&af_adset_id=170649968373&af_ad_id=729624541145&af_siteid=g&af_sub_siteid=&af_keyword=kwd-316578326783&af_sub3=c&af_sub4=Cj0KCQiAqL28BhCrARIsACYJvkdjT4oHDCcdop1WMjr-AKoWy4rU8EsZCM5cpWp62hp0A2f8xyK8I10aAnS8EALw_wcB&utm_medium=paid&utm_source=googlesem&utm_campaign=14668023573&utm_content=ua-homepage-v2&utm_term=kwd-316578326783&gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQiAqL28BhCrARIsACYJvkdjT4oHDCcdop1WMjr-AKoWy4rU8EsZCM5cpWp62hp0A2f8xyK8I10aAnS8EALw_wcB)
* **Acupuncture & Chinese herbs** - [Lydia Akhzar](https://sfherbalmedicine.com/contact/) treats locally
* **TENS (pain) Therapy** - speak to your doctor
* **Protein** - warm milk or cheese before bed can help settle the brain.

Go forth and rest thy weary head. May your slumber be as deep as the ocean’s depths.