



Rajah Ayurveda



GOOD NIGHT

*The sole purpose of this booklet is to provide information from an Ayurvedic perspective. This information is not intended for use in the diagnosis, treatment, cure or prevention of any disease. If you have any serious acute or chronic health concern, please consult a health professional. If you are seeking for medical advises or you have any queries, our Doctors will be happy to guide you. Check with your Doctor before taking herbs / medicines or following the diet when pregnant or nursing.*

*Sleep that knits up the ravelled sleeve of care, the death of each day's life, sore labour's bath, balm of hurt minds, great nature's sound course, chief nourisher in life's feast.*

— William Shakespeare

Sleep is that golden chain that binds the mind and body together. As anyone would understand; after dealing with the effects of sleep deprivation for any given period of time, sleep is something to be re-



spected simply out of what it provides us. Trials and tribulations are an undeniable part of the life experience; sleep is one's bliss after a physically and mentally drained day. It's a necessary restorative process that affects all aspects of human function. To be precise, sleep is a rejuvenative therapy that is mandatory for the better wellbeing of individual health.

But sometimes life interferes with our internal biological rhythms and they become slightly out of whack, which can result in either too much sleep or too little. This article will help to point you in the direction of a number of useful Ayurvedic tools for returning to balance.

Each of us has suffered a restless night at some point in our lives. We've all occasionally sacrificed sleep for a cram session before an exam, or an important deadline. Many of us also know the feeling of losing sleep due to an intense emotional upset or the accumula-

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tion of stress or anxiety. For some of us, loss of sleep is short-lived; for others, it is chronic and we've come to anticipate losing sleep on a regular basis.

But what happens if one is deprived of sleep? The condition is termed as Insomnia; the causes may vary, but its impact can affect all aspects of life. Insomnia is a serious problem, which is characterized by disturbed sleeping pattern or difficulty to fall asleep or both.

Insomnia can be caused by elevated or chronic stress, illness, physical discomfort, environmental factors, side effects from prescribed medications, depression, anxiety, and many other factors. Insomnia can also be an indicator of a more serious health problem. So if you have not already, please consult with your primary healthcare provider about your difficulty sleeping.

Regardless of its origins, losing sleep is hard on our bodies and can be difficult to cope with—even at the acute level. When sleep loss becomes a regular occurrence, it tends to trap us in a vicious downward spiral that can have far-reaching effects on our well-being. We're exhausted, we're taxed mentally, physically, and emotionally, and our judgment is often painfully impaired. We want nothing more than to sleep, but we're often afraid that we won't be able to. And unfortunately, the fear itself can compound anxiety and stress, further inhibiting our ability to surrender to sleep.

### Ayurvedic perspective

Sleep is given utmost importance in Ayurveda as it is considered one among the \*three pillars- give explanation that keeps a person healthy. Sleep has also been explained as one of the thirteen natural urges of the body, which should not be suppressed.

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Lack of sleep is treated as a symptom, a complication and a disorder. The medical grounds of lack of sleep may vary from person to person but it may be due to any underlying disease, psychiatric conditions or any imbalance in the \*three doshas namely Vata , Pitta and Kapha that occurs due to imbalanced diet and regimen, chronic illnesses etc.

Happiness, nourishment, strength, virility, knowledge and long life are attained by sound and timely sleep, and on the other hand, improper sleep leads to sorrow, emaciation of body, weakness, impotence, ignorance and even death. Sleeping during the daytime aggravates kapha and not sleeping during night aggravates vata; mild sleep in sitting position has a neutral effect as it neither aggravates vata or kapha. Sleep during the day is good in summer because nights are short during this period.

Insomnia includes a wide range of sleeping disorders, from lack of sleep quality to lack of sleep quantity.

When the mind, soul and senses get exhausted or become inactive then the individual gets sleep.

Some of the causes of sleep disorders are listed below

- Too much of thinking, anger, fear, joy and grief.
- Excessive physical exertion and fasting
- Improper position during sleep and uncomfortable bed
- Excessive intake of dry food and inadequate intake of food
- Loss of immunity and altered neurological functions
- Accidents, trauma or injuries

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When Vata dosha, which is responsible for movement, activity and thinking process, is in a balanced state we feel creative, light, inspired, and energized. At the same time when it is in imbalanced we feel frazzled and won't be able to stop the constant flow of thoughts and anxiety that turn a person into insomniac with a hyperactive mind.

### Am I having sleeping disorder???

The biggest question loops around the mind of people suffering from difficulty to sleep is that whether it itself is a disease or is secondary to any other condition?

Some of the common issues faced are:-



- Difficulty in falling asleep
- Waking up often during the night and having trouble going back to sleep
- Waking up too early in the morning
- Feeling tired upon waking
- Sleepiness during the day
- General tiredness
- Irritability
- Problems with concentration or memory

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## Insomnia can be classified into three types based on duration:

- **Transient insomnia** - when symptoms last up to three nights
- **Acute insomnia** - also called short-term insomnia. Symptoms persist for several weeks.
- **Chronic insomnia** - this type lasts for months, and sometimes years. The majority of chronic insomnia cases are side effects resulting from underlying or primary health issues that can be a simple migraine to malignant conditions.

## Sleep disorders and ageing

Insomnia becomes more common with age. As you get older, you may experience:

- **Changes in sleep patterns.** Sleep often becomes less restful as you age, so noise or other changes in your environment are more likely to wake you. With age, your internal clock often advances, so you get tired easily by the evening and wake up earlier in the morning. But older people generally need the same amount of sleep as younger people do.
- **Changes in activity.** You may be less physically or socially active. A lack of activity can interfere with a good night's sleep. Also, the less active you are, the more likely you may be to take a daily nap, which can interfere with sleep at night.
- **Changes in health.** Chronic pain from conditions such as arthritis or back problems as well as depression or anxiety can interfere with sleep. Issues that increase the need to urinate during

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the night such as prostate or bladder problems can disrupt sleep. Sleep apnea and restless legs syndrome become more common with age.

- **More medications.** Older people typically use more prescription drugs than younger people do, which increases the chance of insomnia associated with medications.

## Risk factors

Nearly everyone has an occasional sleepless night. But your risk of insomnia is greater if:

- For women, hormonal shifts during the menstrual cycle and in menopause may play a role. During menopause, night sweats and hot flushes often disrupt sleep. Insomnia is also common with pregnancy.
- When you are aged above 60, because of changes in sleep patterns and health, insomnia increases with age.
- Many issues that impact your mental or physical health can disrupt sleep.
- Stressful times and events can cause temporary insomnia. And major or long-lasting stress can lead to chronic insomnia.
- Changing shifts at work or travelling can disrupt your sleep-wake cycle.

## Complications

Sleep is as important to your health as a healthy diet and regular physical activity. Whatever your reason for sleep loss, insomnia can affect you both mentally and physically. People with insomnia report a lower quality of life compared with people who are sleeping well.



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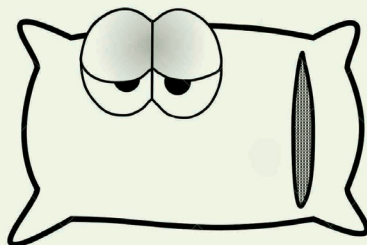
Complications of insomnia may include:

- Lower performance on the job or at school
- Slowed reaction time while driving and a higher risk of accidents
- Mental health disorders, such as depression, anxiety disorders or substance abuse
- Long-term diseases or conditions, such as high blood pressure and heart disease

## Getting A Good Night's Sleep

While each dosha has a unique influence on sleep patterns and imbalances, quality sleep is equally important for all of us. Ayurveda can help us to discover our natural tendencies and to distinguish those from our particular vulnerabilities towards various sleep imbalances.

In addition, Ayurveda has a great deal to say about how to support balanced sleep in general. Often, simple adjustments to routine, exercise, diet, and lifestyle habits can have a profound impact on sleep. In fact, in today's world, where sleep disorders abound, Western medicine is embracing many of Ayurveda's lifestyle strategies in the treatment of sleep disorders. Specific herbs can also be used to support a return to balance.



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## How to get through Insomnia !!

The most important matter is to identify the underlying cause that leads to lack of sleep along with corrections done in the basic levels of life style and food habits.

In our Ayurvedic Centres; the approach has multi pronged aspects such as internal medicines, external therapies including Panchakarma(Purificatory) procedures, diet and lifestyle.

There are numerous internal medicines explained in the classics which are found to be very effective. In our experience; these herbs help to reduce stress and promote natural relaxation without any dependency, supports and improves all aspects of mental functioning thus the quality of sleep.

## Oil Application on Head moordhni Tailam

In Ayurveda while detailing about different therapies; Human body is compared to an upside down tree, where, head is the root of the body, central part and abdomen is considered as trunk of this tree and upper and lower limbs are considered to be the branches of this tree. Just like the roots nourish different parts of a tree, likewise the head is the centre of body which controls all its activities. The head is the seat of brain, nerves and all sense organs, hence it is called as most vital part in our body.



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Moordhni Tailam ,a group of 4 therapies which are meant for nourishing the nervous system, inducing sleep and improving clarity of sense organs is a procedure in which the medicated oil remains in contact with head and scalp for a stipulated time period. It soothes the stressed and agitated mind and helps to keep one calm.

Similarly massage over the feet using medicated oil is also beneficial.

Altogether a course of treatment of 28 days is found to be effective along with proper follow up of some internal medications, balanced diet and lifestyle.

### Lifestyle changes for a good sleep

- Good thought before sleeping ensure good sleep and good dreams.
- Sleep on soft and hygienic bed, with the head pointing towards east or south.
- Avoid eating too late in the evening.
- Avoid or minimize the time spent on your bed such as watching TV, surfing on the web on cell phones; when you are not intending to sleep.
- Avoid stimulants like caffeinated drinks (coffee/tea) and cigarettes during bedtime. People with sleep disorders should not use any of these after dinner.
- Develop the habit of doing abhyangam (ext.applications of oil over the whole body, before shower to promote good sleep).
- Keep your bedtime and wake time consistent from day to day, including weekends.

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- Avoid large meals and beverages before bedtime.
  - Avoid medications which contribute to insomnia.
  - Pleasant smell, listening to soft and good music can promote good sleep.
  - Your body needs time to shift into sleep mode, so spend the last hour before bed, doing calming activities (As it is said- a well-spent day brings happy sleep, like music-good sleep is inevitable for a good day too).
  - Exposure to natural sunlight during the day helps to keep your circadian rhythm healthy (natural time-keeping clock), which improve energy during daytime and quality and duration of sleep during night time.
  - Optimize your bedroom environment, by eliminating external light and noise. Make sure your bedroom is quiet, relaxing, clean, cool and enjoyable.
  - Relax and clean your mind in the evening
  - Exercise regularly, but not before bed
  - Reduce fluid intake in late evening and try to use washroom right before bed.
  - Take a warm bath/shower before bed.
  - Never go to bed with a full stomach/an empty stomach.
  - Yogic practices like pranayama, padmasana, shavasana etc are helpful. Yoga reduces stress and calms the mind.

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## Diet

- Drinking a cup of warm milk before bed is beneficial
- Avoid caffeinated drinks like coffee/tea, during late evening.
- Avoid heavy meals in the evening.
- Limit the fluid intake before bed.
- Avoid drinking alcohol before bed which leads to disrupted sleep patterns.
- Eating spicy foods and high fat diet too close to bedtime will not be a good idea as it causes heartburn, acidity and indigestion.
- Food rich in proteins, eaten too close to bedtime can disrupt the sleep because proteins are difficult to digest.
- Avoid fruits containing much water content water such as water melon after dinner.
- Fruits like apples, bananas, avocados, peaches and cherries will be good.
- Vegetables like spinach, asparagus, broccoli etc are good, to include in dinner.
- Minimize sugar candies/sweet intake, at late evening.
- Chicken/turkey and tuna will be ideal for dinner.
- Legumes like soya and beans which are rich in Magnesium help to relax muscles and thereby eases one to sleep.
- Avoid ice creams and dark chocolates.
- Avoid fast food and energy drinks.

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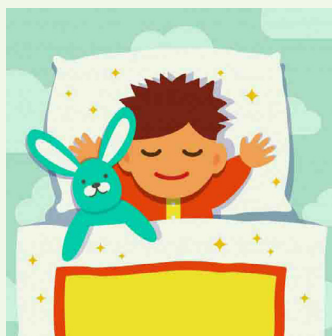
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## Yoga and Meditation

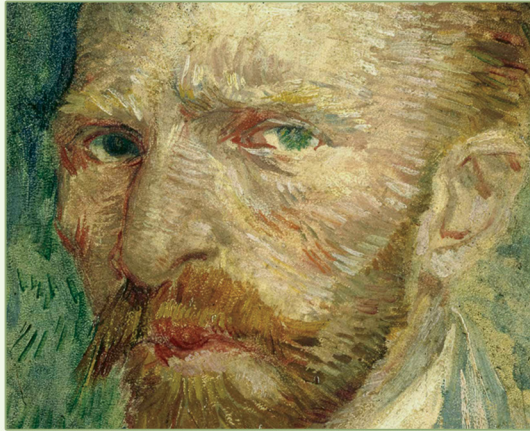
There is ample evidence that yoga and meditation can improve sleep. Yoga is an effective treatment because it addresses insomnia's physical and psychological aspects. Meditation may be an effective behavioral intervention in the treatment of insomnia. Practicing yoga regularly not only improves your ability to fall asleep, but also the quality of that sleep when you finally drop off. Meditation is particularly helpful in these conditions as it directly relieves the body and mind from stress. Yoga revives the body, evokes peace and calm, relieves stress and anxiety; thus can be used as both a holistic and complimentary treatment method in sleeping disorders.

## Enlightening the Final Ray of Hope

Sleep is one of the basic instincts of life. Health and longevity is attained by proper sleep. To make it short and reliable; a basic level of correction of diet & lifestyle giving due respect to the biological clock can be followed. Ayurveda offers plenty of its resources to bring back oneself to a healthy lifestyle that in turn provides a healthy alimentary system along with sound sleep and balanced physical and mental health.



Along with sound sleep and balanced physical and mental health. As with most ailments, when we address the deeper context of our lives and begin to correct the root cause of our imbalances, we are inevitably taking profound steps towards improved overall health and wellness.



### **Vincent Van Gogh, the famous painter**

*Van Gogh treated his insomnia by dousing his mattress and pillow with camphor, a relative of turpentine. Scholars believe the camphor slowly poisoned him and was one of the factors that pushed him to suicide.*

## OTHER TITLES IN THIS SERIES



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