



Run Hard. Rest Well.

Championing Rest. Equipping Leaders. Changing Lives.

Brenda@runhardrestwell.org | 260.239.1297 | RunHardRestWell.org

Is your sleep a train wreck?

Take an “offensive stance,” be proactive, and turn the tide!

Sleep Survival Guide

Crisis is my middle name and sleep deprivation has been my game—a game that just about destroyed me. Thanks to my Type A personality and four special-needs kiddos (of the extreme variety), crisis is all my family has known for the past 25 years. I have wrestled extensively with both sleep quantity and quality for most of my life. A radical turn-around came in 2014. Here is what I’ve learned along the way.

Price to Pay

The inability to sleep or a defiant disregard for sleep is costly. Designed by God to be a rejuvenating powerhouse, the lack of sleep wreaks havoc. It makes us less patient and flexible in our closest relationships. It sabotages our waistlines and destroys our immune system, to name only a few things.

Have you counted the cost?

There is hope.

Battle Ready

In this battle for our lives, our sanity, and our sleep, we must know and name the enemy. The enemy is cortisol overload. Cortisol is a “stress reaction” hormone that does amazing things for us in the short-term. Cortisol prepares us to face a difficult task or situation and sets us up for success. When cortisol production is constant, as it is for many in our 24/7 world, it positions us to self-destruct.

The key to restorative sleep is twofold.

- We must understand how to negate cortisol overload.
- We must acquire a tool kit for preventative care and damage control.

Counteracting Cortisol Overload

Every night we do not get a minimum of 7 hours of sleep, our bodies automatically pump out more cortisol to compensate for the lack of restorative hormones that were not released to restore, heal, and prepare us for optimal functioning the next day. (Don’t panic. We can turn this ship around!) How do we break the cycle? <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4688585/> and <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/sleep-deprivation-obesity/>

Long-term Sleep Challenges

Look for help at the end of this post for help and suggestions.

Help! I can’t sleep

Explore a few tricks, tips, and insights whether you can’t fall asleep or can’t stay asleep. Before trying any of these “this worked for me” options, please talk to your doctor, check for drug interactions, and do your own search for dosages.

I can't FALL ASLEEP

1. **Calcium and magnesium** One hour before bed, try taking 600 mg of **Calcium** and 600 to 12,00 mg of **Magnesium Glycinate** (You may have to order on-line or go to a health food store. Most stores only sell Magnesium Oxide, which our bodies do not absorb as well.). Calcium sets us up for a more restorative REM sleep. Magnesium Glycinate is very relaxing. Read more <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/releases/163169#1> **Note:** I don't know the impact of calcium intake on men – might be fine! I don't know. Research it.
2. **Glycine.** This power-packed amino acid promotes sleep in a number of ways and supports whole-body health. Check it out. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/sleep-newzzz/201902/4-sleep-benefits-glycine>
3. **Melatonin.** Again, one hour before bed. For some this can be very effective. For others it does not help. For some it works for a few weeks. It can be stopped and then restarted. **Consult your doctor before giving this to children.** <https://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/news/20181112/as-melatonin-use-rises-so-do-safety-concerns>
4. **Progesterone** For women only. Talk to your doctor about progesterone and sleep. Read more <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17168724> and <https://grantome.com/grant/NIH/R01-AG020082-02>
5. **L-Theanine** This amino acid can be taken throughout the day to lower cortisol impact and before bed. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/sleep-newzzz/201708/what-you-need-know-about-l-theanine>
6. **Benadryl** Take Benadryl if you find yourself unexpectedly tossing and turning. Do not take more than a few nights in a row. Watch out for PM versions of over-the-counter pain medications. These contain Benadryl.
7. Explore **Vitamin D** and **Zinc**
 - a. Vitamin D <https://www.bulletproof.com/sleep/sleep-hacks/bulletproof-your-sleep-with-vitamin-d/>
 - b. Zinc <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/articles/201807/zzzz-zinc>
8. **Prescription Medications** Talk to your doctor. As you explore various options, ask about Trazadone. **Trazadone** “broke the insomnia cycle” in my life and set me on a course of restorative sleep. Since 2014, despite crushing life realities (like a child being placed in hospice care), I have gotten the best sleep of my entire life. I have never felt better. It took low-dose trazadone before bed for a few weeks. As I began to get a full night's sleep, I cut the dose in half and then was off, finding the extra support I needed in calcium, magnesium, and progesterone, with occasional to rare use of Benadryl or Trazadone.
 - a. Upping levels of serotonin is a powerful cortisol overload busters and prepares your body to maximize your own body's production of melatonin. Read more <https://mammothcomfort.com/melatonin-vs-serotonin-science-behind-good-nights-sleep/>
 - b. Also <https://www.healthline.com/health/sleep/trazodone-for-sleep#advantages>

Help! I can't STAY ASLEEP

This can be a difficult, complex issue or super simple.

- If you routinely wake up in the middle of the night, wide-awake, unable to go back to sleep, try eating a small snack before bed that contains some protein and some carbs – cheese and crackers, a slice of peanut butter toast, a few nuts and a banana ... Give it a try. It can work wonders! https://www.bbc.co.uk/food/articles/eat_for_good_sleep

- Waking up in the middle of the night, can also be a part of aging and hormone changes that are trickier to tackle. Talk to your doctor, but first try a snack of protein and carbs. Use this strategy to break the cycle of middle-of-the-night wakefulness.

Sleep Strategies That Transform

To tackle sleep issues, we have to confront and combat cortisol overload. The best way to do that is to explore Restorative Wellness.

- Begin a diligent exploration of other ways to reduce cortisol overload.
 - 14 Ideas to Combat Cortisol <https://runhardrestwell.org/14-ideas-to-combat-cortisol/>
 - Restoring Margin – Embracing Life! <https://runhardrestwell.org/individuals/>
 - Blog posts on sleep -- <https://runhardrestwell.org/?s=sleep>
 - 4 ½ minute Ted Ed video. Good stuff. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dqONk48I5vY>

Parting Prayer

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. Amen (Reinhold Niebuhr – 1932)

P.S. Long-term Sleep Challenges

Have you been on a long-haul journey of sleeplessness, insomnia, up in the middle-of-the-night, and fatigue? You are not alone. Go on the offensive and visit your doctor.

1. Tell your doctor what's up. Consider asking him/her to begin an investigation. Check out your:
 - a. Thyroid function – critical! I was hypothyroid. I was tired, but wired and unable to sleep. Suffered for years. Get your thyroid tested. Much research point to the fact that our TSH should be under 2.0. (For many symptomatic people, a TSH range of 2-5, may indicate that their thyroid gland needs support or at least further testing. <https://www.uclahealth.org/endocrine-center/tsh-thyroid-stimulating-hormone-test#:~:text=Normal%20Values%3A,you%20are%20being%20treated%20appropriately.>
 - b. Sleep apnea. If you have any concerns – this could save your life or the life of someone you love. Get a sleep study! (I just walked with a young man in his twenties who was always tired and gaining weight. Once tested and on treatment – he is doing great!)
 - c. Blood pressure. High pressures, especially in the morning when you rise, can indicate a lack of restorative sleep. High blood pressure is a silent killer. Invest in an automatic cuff and monitor at home. Work with your doctor. Some people can improve mild high blood pressure by 1) eating a banana or baked potato each day 2) power walking 20-30 minutes each day and 3) improving the quality and quantity of their sleep.
 - d. Check out your ferritin level, if you are a woman. This is the “iron storage” number. Low iron reserves can impact the quality of your sleep.
 - e. Is pain keeping you up at night? Aggressively try to combat this issue. I lived with Carpel Tunnel pain way too long. The lack of restorative sleep had a devastating impact on my over-all health. I gained 12 pounds that year. Not worth it. The surgery worked instant wonders.
 - f. Do you take Beta Blockers? They can disrupts sleep. Ask your doctor if you can take them in the morning.
2. Don't be afraid of short term use of a prescription medication. Sometimes we need help to “break the cycle” of chronic sleep deprivation. Good sleep begets good sleep. Getting good sleep is a key to reducing cortisol overload.