

# Kate Cook

The Business of Wellness

## The Sleep Issue



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“Kate has now delivered two web-based seminars across our organisation and the value of her knowledge is highly recognised and valued by our employees. Colleagues have been impressed with the interactive nature of the webinars and the realisation of the need for healthy nutrition. Kate’s advice really makes you think about how we can improve our wellbeing by considering how the food we eat has an effect on everything we do, this is coupled to her vibrant approach and warm personality. We thoroughly recommend these sessions to other organisations.”

David Tempest, Director of Employee Engagement, Elsevier

[View my website to find out more](#)

Many of us have faced a new reality over the last few months, working a lot more from home. Whilst this has allowed many of us to potentially spend more time in bed (no commuting and getting up early), other factors have compounded blocks to getting the sleep we need. First there is worry; worry over our futures and what the so-called “new normal” will entail, and whether this new normal has taken account of us and our lives. Secondly, the lure of films, media and screens tempt us from turning in early, and the blue light from the screens shutting down our ability to switch off.



### A look at how our sleep has been effected during the last six months:

We have some findings from the US, which reasonably we might say could mirror similar results in the UK...

Research through the “The Better Sleep Council” (funded by a mattress company)

**54% > 49%**

January 2020 March 2020

Americans getting the minimum 7-8 hours of recommended sleep

**30% > 24%**

January 2020 March 2020

Americans woke up feeling rested and refreshed

**45% < 73%**

January 2020 March 2020

Negative posts on social media relative to sleep

## Why we need to sleep

• Immune function • Stress reduction • Healthy heart health • Inflammation • Weight loss (!) • Memory and cognitive function • Repair

## 3(+3) top tips for better sleep

### 1. Keep your levels of magnesium topped up

One of the most common UK deficiencies, magnesium is a key mineral, including optimising bone, nerve and energy creation in the body. It serves as a relaxant. Try taking 400 mg of magnesium 30 minutes before bed (I like the brand Magnesium 365 – I have nothing to do with the company!) Try taking a warm bath before bed with Epsom salts (magnesium is absorbed effectively through the skin).

### 2. Caffeine

It’s super obvious but really limit your coffee (and tea) intake – caffeine has a half life of at least 8 hours, and the addictive dose of caffeine is surprisingly low. One strong commercial coffee is likely to be way over the dose. Even if you think you are immune to the effects of caffeine, your brainwaves would beg to differ!

### 3. Eat real food – balance blood sugar

Avoid foods that are processed, and are: Sweet, fluffy (think white bread, or popcorn) and white (processed). Balancing a key hormone, insulin means that stress hormones are likely to be more effectively under-control, and for some people a stable blood sugar can mean waking in the night is a thing of the past!

The following three tips are courtesy of Marcus de Guingand, whose company “Third Pillar of Health” can identify Sleep issues within companies [marcus@thirdpillarofhealth.com](mailto:marcus@thirdpillarofhealth.com) and [www.thirdpillarofhealth.com](http://www.thirdpillarofhealth.com)

### 4. Sleep loves a routine

Disturbed routines are one of the main reasons we’ve seen a worldwide spike in sleeping problems in recent months, along with anxiety. Whilst a lack of commute means we potentially have more time to sleep we’re more likely to alter our daily routine. Whether staying up later, perhaps bingeing on a box set, or sleeping in later if we don’t have a Zoom call. The thing is sleep loves a routine. Try to come up with a routine to suit your new ‘normal’. Maintaining the same sleep and wake times every day can really help with improving sleep.

### 5. Measure your alcohol intake

It’s been well documented that alcohol sales have risen significantly during lockdown. It’s perhaps no surprise. Even in better times many people reach for a ‘nightcap’ to help them sleep. Whilst alcohol can help us fall asleep faster the quality of sleep after alcohol tends to be less restful and less recuperative. We won’t tell you to not have a drink, but just

be mindful when you need to be happy, alert or productive the next day. The body processes 1 unit of alcohol an hour. So try to go to bed ‘alcohol free’.

### 6. Ditch the sleep tracker (perhaps)

New gadgets encourage us to track just about every aspect of our health and fitness. Personally, I find some of it very useful. I quite often take a look at my daily step count to see how I’ve fared over a week or month. However, when it comes to sleep they can create more problems than they solve. If you are one of the people that looks at what percentage of your sleep is spent in each stage – especially deep sleep – turn it off! There is a new phenomenon called ‘orthosomnia’ where we actually create anxiety about our sleep through endless tracking and attempts to optimise it. If you feel rested and fully functioning you are probably sleeping well enough. Their accuracy is also open to question – especially on details of different sleep stages.

## Bonus

**TRY QI GONG** (mentioned in the last Top Tips from last month) I am not from the Qi Gong Education Council, I promise! Qi Gong is great for stress reduction, and creating boundaries – deceptive in its understated effort, but a massive bang for the buck in benefit. In effect Qi Gong is a standing meditation (without getting bored – I last 2 seconds on focussing with seated meditation). [Here is a link](#) to a Qi Gong routine on YouTube.

### TRY FUNKY LIGHT BLOCKING GLASSES

Try either TrueDark or Swanwick (I have the Swanwicks and again I am nothing to do with the company). I also have an amazing sleep mask from Swanwick – expensive, but worth every penny.

Happy Dreams :)

