



# SLEEP SOUNDLY WITH YOGA

By Andrea Cirignano, Yoga Instructor

Yoga has a reputation for being relaxing and calming. A few bedtime stretches can be beneficial for anyone, but did you know that your morning or evening yoga class can also help you sleep?

Sometimes the body can't sleep when you haven't had enough exercise or movement, so active or challenging poses earlier in the day can lead to a more restful night. Also, breathing exercises practiced in class can lead to ease in 'turning off' later in the day.

If you need to get more exercise, attend a Vinyasa Flow or Yoga Flow & Go class, practice a few Sun Salutations, or hold a few challenging poses.

If you're already quite active, include a few restorative poses in your yoga practice or bedtime routine. Remember to stay until the end of class. The final resting pose, savasana, is just as important as any of the other yoga poses. While not a sleep replacement, savasana helps restore and refresh both body and mind because you get many of the benefits you'd receive from a quick nap.

Other yoga poses that help with sleep include forward folding, Balasana (Child's Pose), and twisting. All reduce stress and the former two help calm the mind and reduce anxiety. Twists help the body with digestion and stress to allow for more peaceful sleep. Do a few seated or supine twists if you find yourself waking up in the night.

Last, but not least, is Viparita Karani (Legs-Up-the-Wall Pose). This is the number one yoga recommendation for insomnia. Legs-Up-the-Wall releases joints and muscles of the low body, releases back tension, and quiets the mind. This pose can be performed as a replacement for final savasana and is a great option for those who have trouble falling asleep. To get into this posture, lie on your side with hips and feet close to the wall, turn onto your back and extend legs up the wall, resting heels on the wall. Stay in this posture anywhere from 10 breaths to 10 minutes.