redbook

6 Reasons You're Always Tired

"Working mothers are like just like rockstars on tour..."

"Working mothers are like just like rockstars on tour," says Dr. Gabrielle Francis, a naturopathic physician who wrote *The Rockstar Remedy*. Much like her clients, who include some of the biggest musicians in the biz, your own busy schedule and long work hours might make it hard to sleep eight blissful hours each night, but here are a few things to avoid to make sure the sleep you do get is the best it can be.

1. That Daily Nightcap

A nightly glass of wine or a carb-laden snack before bed can be a comforting way to end the day—until you wake up tossing and turning a few hours later. Alcohol and carbs both increase your levels of cortisol, a stress hormone that interferes with restful sleep, says Dr. Francis. And when you wake up in the middle of the night, it's because your blood sugar has crashed. Avoid that by sticking to a high-protein evening snack such as a hard-boiled egg or yogurt with muesli. And if you are going to have that glass of wine, savor it along with a piece of cheese, since the protein will help stabilize your blood sugar, she says.

2. Not Getting Enough Sunlight
Many of us are low in vitamin D-3 and melatonin, both of which impact sleep cycles, because we're not getting enough exposure to sunlight, says Dr. Francis. You need 20 minutes out in natural light (even if it's cloudy out) without sunscreen for your body to convert vitamin D to its active form. And when light hits the back of your retina, the body creates melatonin, but sunglasses interfere with that process. "Take a 20-minute walk at lunch with your sunglasses off," suggests Dr. Francis. Bonus: the mid-day workout itself will help you sleep better: A 2011 study in the journal Mental Health and Physical Activity found that participants who exercised at least 150 minutes a week fell asleep quicker and were less likely to feel sleepy during the day. If you can't get outdoors, invest in a full-spectrum light bulb (which mimics the light of the sun) for your desk.

3. You Lack an Evening Ritual
It's tempting to zone out watching television or catch up on your Facebook feed at the end of a long day—but it's not worth messing with your ZZZs. Not only can the light from TV and devices keep you from falling a sleep, but choosing instead to dedicate a half hour to a warm bath, journaling, or meditation can counteract the effects of stress and set the stage for a good night's sleep. If you're going to use your devices anyway, turn down the brightness and adjust your screen settings so the color is warmer—blue light is the most disruptive, though any light can interfere with sleep.

4. A Health Problem Is Keeping You Up
Underlying hormonal imbalances and health conditions such as diabetes, migraines, depression, and even things like PMS can all interfere with sleep. If you feel like you're doing everything right but still wake up tired, see your doctor to get to the bottom of the situation. Sleep apnea, in which your breathing is interrupted hundreds of times during the night, is a common cause of poor-quality sleep, and can lead to serious heart problems—and according to a recent UCLA study, the dangers appear to be much more pronounced in women.

5. Taking Supplements at the Wrong Time
Certain supplements can keep you up at night and should be taken earlier in the day, such as B-complex vitamins and ginseng. Others, however, such as magnesium, calcium, and chamomile, can have a soothing effect. Magnesium in particular is great to take at night since it calms the nervous system, says Dr. Francis.

6. Dust Bunnies Under Your Bed
It's easy to skimp on cleaning the areas you don't see too often, but if you're allergic to dust or mold, you'll want to banish allergens from the bedroom. (And sadly, the same goes for pets you're allergic to.) Along with thoroughly dusting and vacuuming, regularly wash pillows, drapes, and linens in hot water, and keep an eye out for mold in your potted plants, which is often caused by over-watering.

Link: http://www.redbookmag.com/body/health-fitness/a19719/6-reasons-youre-always-tired/