



SLEEPING ON HOT NIGHTS

- **Aim for circulating air over your skin**
- **A cool shower before bed helps**
- **Use cotton sheets and clothing**
- **A fan can help**
- **Have a warmer bed-cover close by for when your body cools down overnight**
- **Don't get dehydrated or sunburnt during the day**
- **Keep your thoughts positive, relaxing and unemotional**

Many people dread summer because of the problems they experience on the hot nights. There are some things that you can do to help (short of installing air conditioning).

Skin temperature is the key

Research has found the ideal sleeping temperature is around 17 to 19 degrees Celsius. If this level can't be provided then it helps to have air flowing over your skin to help cool your body. Good ventilation with an open window can help. Many find ceiling fans useful but even a small, cheap fan can make a difference. If it's noisy, try ear plugs although they can take a few nights to get used to.

Be sure to expose as much of your skin to flowing air as possible. Try sleeveless tops, loose fitting shorts, underwear, a short nightie or nothing at all. If you feel more comfortable with a sheet keep it loosely draped over the bed. Cotton is the best fabric both for pyjamas and sheets. Avoid synthetic materials.

Have a cool shower before you go to bed and if you are wakeful in the night and feel you can't fall asleep again, have another cool shower.

The temperature of your hands and feet are particularly important for sleeping. You can't fall asleep, for example, if your feet are either too

hot or too cold. Be sure you can stick your feet out from under the sheets or doona in the middle of the night if you need to. On hot nights cooling your hands and face with a cold face-washer can be useful. Some people have ice packs ready for bed-time and place them on their skin during the night. A hot-water bottle can be made cold.

For some air conditioning or evaporative cooling is the answer, but this is a more expensive solution.

Be prepared

It usually takes longer to fall asleep when you are hot, so don't go to bed too early. In fact don't go to bed until you actually feel quite sleepy.

As you fall asleep your core body temperature drops, reaching a low point around 3-5am at night. Anticipate that you may actually get cold during the night and have a lightweight doona or blanket ready to pull over you, either at the bottom of the bed or along-side your body.

Make sure you are not dehydrated during the night by drinking plenty of water across the day, especially if you have been out in the heat. Have a water bottle near your bed if need be. Sunburn will definitely affect the quality of your sleep so follow the Slip, Slop and Slap guidelines.



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Consider your sleeping environment

Tell your bed partner it's too hot to sleep curled up together so you don't also have to cope with their body heat. A spread-eagled position will allow for lots of air circulation.

An open window can make a difference and help circulate the air as it cools overnight but make sure that it doesn't result in an army of mosquitos or flies. Hanging a wet sheet in front of an open window will cool the air entering your bedroom.

Try to avoid the bedroom getting too heated during the day by having heavy drapes or blinds on the windows and keep them closed all day when it's forecast to be hot.

Attitude is important

When it comes to sleep, many of us expect perfection. However, sleep is a rollercoaster of light and deep sleep across the night and short

periods of being awake during the night are normal. When it's hot you will feel more uncomfortable and restless. Therefore, once you do wake up you may have more trouble getting back to sleep. Don't keep checking the clock as this will cause an emotional reaction.

The key is to stay calm and relaxed and try to achieve a 'dozy' state where you may move gently between sleep and wake. Keep your thoughts positive and neutral – don't dwell on things that may make you emotional or make your mind too busy. Think about a past – or future – relaxing holiday. Breathe slowly and more deeply.

If you are frustrated get up and try to cool off and calm down. Often it's cooler outside the house at night than inside. Try not to get anxious about how you will cope the next day with reduced sleep. You have coped with disrupted sleep before, you may just be doing things in a less than perfect way. And when it's hot, you won't be the only one.

Where can I find out more?

<https://sleepfoundation.org/sleep-news/sleeping-when-it-blistering-hot>

For information on over 60 different sleep related topics, written by professionals, visit the Sleep Health Foundation Information Library at www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au.



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