

Yoga support for sleep difficulties

A gentle 8-pose evening reset designed to help the body slow down before rest.

Sleep difficulties can be frustrating, especially when the body feels tired but the mind remains alert. Stress, worry, sensory overload, changes in routine, pain, hormones, medication, neurodivergence and many other factors can affect sleep. Gentle yoga cannot guarantee sleep, but a predictable low-demand routine can help create a transition between the activity of the day and bedtime.

How to use this resource

Try the sequence in a quiet, comfortable space 30-60 minutes before bed, or whenever you want to begin winding down. Keep the lighting softer if that feels comfortable. Use cushions, blankets, a wall or a chair. There is no need to stretch deeply. The aim is to reduce effort and give the body cues that the day is slowing.

The 8-pose gentle reset

1	Easy pose	30-60 sec
2	Side stretch	20-30 sec each side
3	Butterfly	30-60 sec
4	Child's pose	30-60 sec
5	Forward fold	20-40 sec
6	Knees to chest	30-60 sec
7	Legs up wall	1-3 min
8	Resting pose	1-3 min

Move gently

Stop if you feel pain, dizziness, numbness, unusual shortness of breath or feel unwell. If you are pregnant, recovering from illness, surgery or injury, or have a condition that affects movement or balance, check with an appropriately qualified health professional.

The eight poses

Keep each movement comfortable and unforced. A smaller version is still useful.

1. Easy pose

Sit on a cushion, folded blanket or chair. Let the hands rest and soften the shoulders. Notice several natural breaths without trying to change them.

2. Side stretch

From sitting, place one hand down for support and reach the opposite arm gently upward and across. Keep both sitting bones supported. Repeat on the other side.

3. Butterfly

Sit with the soles of the feet loosely together and knees supported by cushions if needed. Stay upright or lean forward only a little. There is no need to press the knees down.

4. Child's pose

From hands and knees, move the hips back toward the heels only as far as comfortable. Support the head and chest with cushions. A seated forward rest over a table is an alternative.

5. Forward fold

From standing or sitting, soften the knees and fold only as far as feels easy. Rest the hands on thighs, a chair or cushions. Rise slowly.

6. Knees to chest

Lie on your back and draw one or both knees toward the body without forcing. Hold behind the thighs if that is more comfortable. A gentle side-to-side rock can feel soothing.

7. Legs up wall

Rest the legs against a wall, sofa or on a chair. Adjust the distance until the hips and back are comfortable. Stay for a minute or two if it feels restful.

8. Resting pose

Lie down or recline with cushions supporting the head and knees. Let the arms rest wherever comfortable. Notice the weight of the body being supported.

Helping the body prepare for sleep

Sleep often responds better to gentle cues than to pressure.

Create a transition

If possible, give yourself a small buffer between work, scrolling, household tasks or emotionally demanding conversations and trying to sleep. The yoga sequence can become part of that transition. Repeating the same few steps can make the routine familiar and reduce decision-making at the end of the day.

Reduce stimulation where you can

Consider lighting, temperature, noise, clothing, bedding and scent. Some people settle with darkness and silence; others need predictable background sound or a weighted blanket. Neurodivergent people may find sensory comfort particularly important. Choose what helps your own nervous system rather than following a perfect bedtime formula.

When thoughts keep arriving

You do not need to empty your mind. If thoughts appear, notice them and return attention to something simple: the contact of the floor, the warmth of a blanket, the rhythm of breathing, or the feeling of a supported posture. Keeping a notebook nearby can help if you are worried about forgetting something.

Do not turn sleep into a performance

Trying very hard to sleep can increase frustration and alertness. This routine is not a test. Its purpose is to offer rest and reduce demand. Even if sleep does not come immediately, a period of gentle, supported rest still has value.

A short evening check-in

What is keeping me switched on? Physical tension, worry, sensory overload, unfinished tasks, hunger, pain or something else?

What would make the next 20 minutes gentler? Less light, less noise, warmth, a drink, writing something down, a pose, or simply lying down?

Sleep reflection & further support

Look for patterns with curiosity rather than judgement.

Night	Routine / pose	Settling 0-10	Sleep felt	What I noticed
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				

When to seek more support

Speak with your GP or another qualified health professional if sleep problems are persistent, significantly affect daytime functioning, or are accompanied by symptoms that concern you. Ongoing insomnia can have many causes and may benefit from assessment. Evidence-based psychological approaches such as cognitive behavioural therapy for insomnia (CBT-I) may be recommended for persistent insomnia.

Sources and further reading

Useful evidence-based sources include NHS information on insomnia and sleep, NICE guidance relating to insomnia and sleep difficulties, and research reviews examining yoga and mind-body approaches for sleep. Yoga may support relaxation and sleep quality for some people, but evidence varies and it should not replace appropriate medical assessment or treatment.

A message from Maggie

When sleep is difficult, bedtime can start to feel like another challenge you have to get right. This resource is intended to take some of that pressure away. You can use all eight poses, choose only one, or simply rest. Let the goal be creating a gentler ending to the day rather than forcing yourself to sleep.

Space to Breathe Therapy - Educational wellbeing resource; not medical treatment.