



Fine Tuning Sleep During Layover

*While away from home, look forward to quality sleep —
a good book and some masking tape, coupled with a few practical hints
provide the special keys to rest.*

—
by

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Quality rest and sleep during layovers (and at home) require attention to various environmental factors, including light levels, noise levels, air quality, temperature levels and other factors. Hotel facilities, as well may not provide an environment conducive to obtaining deep quality sleep, a requirement for the regeneration of freshness.

A dark, comfortable room is necessary for deep sleep. Crew should request a room in the hotel's quiet area. The room should be located away from any restaurant, bar, lobby, swimming pool or other noisy area, such as elevators, beverage machines and ice machines.

Light leaks from outside the hotel room around window curtains and doorways often interfere with deep sleep. An easy way to control unwanted light (which becomes much more bothersome as dark adaptation of the eyes occurs after switching off the room lights) is to keep a roll of masking tape handy. Use pieces of the tape to pull the edges of the window curtains together, or tape the curtain edges to walls where light is leaking. This is

remarkably effective in darkening the room, and the pieces of masking tape can be removed without causing damage.

Electric digital clocks produce annoying light as seen by the dark-adapted eye. A piece of masking tape over the numbers will reduce the light to a non-bothersome level. A flashing neon sign, for example, is very disturbing. The worst light offenders are harsh fluorescent lights and especially mercury vapor street lights.

A major source of light leak into the room may be from under the room door. A bath towel across the bottom of the door should prevent most of the light from this source. The towel will also keep out cigarette smoke from the hallway and will help dampen noise from outside the room.

- Room Temperature

It is impossible to sleep well in a cold room if the

bed, blankets and pillows are not comfortably warm. The room should have a quiet and adequate air conditioning system. Ideally, the room temperature will be in the 60-68 degrees F (16-20 degrees C) range. Drafts are very annoying and air generated by bothersome vents should be deflected. A piece of cardboard and masking tape can be used to deflect the air flow away from the bed if necessary. Excessively warm or humid air hinders quality sleep.

- Heavy Meal

Deep sleep is difficult to obtain immediately following the consumption of a large meal, or one heavy in spices, fats or rich desserts. Such meals may make one drowsy, but sleep will be restless, light and not refreshing. Meals should be modest, accompanied by little or no alcohol. Beverages containing caffeine also should be limited because these interfere with deep sleep.

- Soft Music

Some people find that music from a nearby radio, set to a low volume level, is relaxing and promotes sleep.

- Reading Material

Many people find that a few minutes of reading after lying down is restful and promotes the onset of sleep. The reading material may be a subject far removed from that of daily work — a mystery, a western, some aspect of history or a favorite hobby. Such reading enables the brain to switch to a topic other than the day's earlier events, which may interfere with sleep.

- Insects

If there are flies or mosquitoes in a room, sleep may be periodically interrupted. These insects should be eliminated before going to sleep; a swatter may be preferable to unpleasant smelling sprays, which could interfere with sleep.

- Exercise

Some people find that some type of exercise prior to retiring puts the body in a physically relaxed state that promotes quality sleep. Depending upon the individual, this exercise may be walking, jogging, swimming, weight lifting, yoga, warm-up exercises, or stretching. Some people carry lightweight bungee cords (bicycle inner tubes will work) in their travel bag and use them for stretch-

ing and pulling exercises.

- Warm Bath

A pleasant way to relax and promote sleep is to stretch out in a warm soapy bath. The bath offers another opportunity for restful reading. Also, try a sauna or a hot tub if the hotel has them.

- Alcohol

Alcohol has been found to have a combination of excitatory and depressant effects. Which of these effects prevails following alcohol consumption depends upon the amount of alcohol taken, the nature of any accompanying substances, the relation of consumption to the circadian rhythm, and other factors, including the individual's past practice of alcohol consumption. As a general rule, alcohol-induced sleep is not refreshing and is of low quality. The hang-over effect further impairs the state of alertness the next day.

- Tobacco

Persons who smoke every 20 minutes or so while awake, will experience nicotine withdrawal while asleep, resulting in lower quality sleep. Pilots should avoid smoking altogether, as it threatens health and medical certification.

- Medications

Sleep medication must be taken with extreme caution by crew members. Such medication has great potential for adverse effects, including quality of sleep, the hangover effect, the habituation effect, and the potential for adverse interaction with other substances. Careful monitoring by a flight surgeon is absolutely essential when combining sleep medication with flying.

- Air Quality and Layover Facilities

Some hotel rooms leak considerable dust and other substances, including tobacco smoke, into rooms. In some cases, bacteria and viruses have leaked into rooms. A tragic example of this is "Legionnaire's disease," which was discovered following leakage of bacteria into hotel rooms. If air is entering the room around the door edges from the inner hallway put a towel against the door crack along the floor, or use masking tape and paper to temporarily block the influx of irritants. Depending on design, some rooms have more of these pollutants than others. The above approach should solve the problem.

Sleep Stages

Sleep stages are determined most specifically with the continuous recording electroencephalogram (EEG). The following description is greatly simplified but provides the major categories of sleep.

Stage One

The lightest sleep. Usually in the last third of a six- to eight-hour sleep period. Rapid eye movement, or REM sleep accompanies dreaming during this stage. Dreams are considered beneficial in that they relieve mental tension caused from the waking period.

Stage Two

Intermediate depth between stages one and three (EEG determined).

Stage Three

Intermediate depth between stages two and four (EEG determined).

Stage Four

The deepest and most refreshing sleep. Occurs mainly in the first two hours of sleep. Best achieved in a comfortable, quiet and dark environment.

• Relaxation Techniques

After the sleep environment has been optimized, some relaxation techniques may be used to aid in inducing sleep. For example, slowly stretching the back, arms and legs and rotating the head and neck forward and back, and from side to side, will have a relaxing effect. Also, massaging the hands and feet, specifically moving all of the finger, wrist, toe and ankle joints, will aid in relaxation. Massaging the arm and leg muscles, particularly the biceps and the lower leg muscles, has a relaxing effect. During a period of days and weeks, the body will associate these relaxation measures with the onset of the sleep process. Upon lying down, consciously start imagining the relaxation of one finger joint at a time, and ultimately one toe joint at a time. It is likely that, on most occasions, one will fall asleep before getting through all 10 digits (if not, start over again).◆

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