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[Dr. Michael J. Breus](#)

Clinical psychologist

Posted: March 17, 2011 08:42 AM

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An Easy Trick for Better Sleep

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Most of us grew up listening to our parents tell us to straighten our room and make the bed. I'm sure I am

not the only one who wondered why it was so important to make the bed, especially because it was just going to be unmade again that night! To be honest, some of us may still feel that way.

It turns out that, like many things, mom and dad may have been right about this one. A recent article suggests that [a clean room could lead to a better night's sleep](#).

Your bedroom is more than just the room that happens to house your bed -- it is your personal environment for sleeping. [A proper sleep environment is essential for quality sleep](#). We're talking about more than sweeping the room to keep allergies at bay (though a clean room is incredibly helpful if you suffer from seasonal or dust-related allergies).

Believe it or not, the perfect sleep environment is all-inclusive. The study found that participants slept better when...

- they made their beds every day,
- bed sheets were clean and changed once a week,
- the bedrooms were [dark](#) and cool,
- they slept on comfortable mattresses and pillows.

The participants even reported that sheets with a clean, fresh scent helped them to sleep more comfortably.

I cannot emphasize this point enough: A clean, cool, dark and comfortable atmosphere is needed to create an ideal sleep environment. Particularly comfort!

The ideal sleep environment soothes all of your body's senses, easing you into sleep. We've talked before about the positive impact that a cool bedroom temperature has on sleep. You can darken your bedroom by using low wattage bulbs (45 watts or less) near your bed and making sure all the lights are off for bedtime. A quiet room can be achieved by shutting off all electronics: TV, computers and cell phones. Try using a fan or a noise machine if outside noises are an issue.

Of course, none of this matters if you cannot get comfortable!

Many people neglect the importance of comfort. Your mattress and pillow are the building blocks of your sleep environment. Making sure they are right for you and still supportive is the first and most important step towards a better sleep experience.

How do you know if you are sleeping on a "dead" pillow? Follow these simple steps:

1. Begin by laying your pillow across your arm and look at how it's folded.
2. Does it have a slight fold, but still sticks out at the ends? If so, then the structural integrity of your pillow is fine.
3. Or does your pillow fold -- or flop -- over your arm, like an old saddle bag? Then you have a dead pillow, and it needs to be replaced.

Still not convinced? Try this:

1. Lay your pillow on top of your bed and fold it in half.
2. Now place a shoe on top and let go.
3. If the shoe goes flying, then your pillow is fine; if it stays put, then you need a new pillow.

I suggest developing a consistent schedule that includes routine bedtime habits to calm you down and prepare you for sleep. Avoid alcohol and caffeine within three hours of bedtime. Know how much sleep you need to wake up feeling rested and go to bed in time make it happen. Adding a few simple tasks to your

routine -- taking a little time at the end of the day to straighten up your bedroom, making your bed when you first wake up and washing the bed linens once a week -- can help to create a relaxing ambience for your sleep environment.

Parents, don't forget to have the kids make their beds and clean their rooms too; tell them it's good for their health!

Sweet dreams,

*Michael J. Breus, Ph.D.
The Sleep Doctor™*

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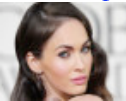
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