

pudding, being careful to stop eating two hours before bed. "This allows your food time to digest effectively," Pearson explains. I'm a little hungry by the time I get into bed but manage to drift off to sleep in under an hour.

## WEDNESDAY

*So now I've got to exercise, too*

My eating plan has worked wonders – I wake up feeling more rested than ever, albeit absolutely starving! Today, I'm testing the theory that going to the gym can tire you out and improve your sleep quality. I do a quick google search and find that, according to [sleepcouncil.org.uk](http://sleepcouncil.org.uk), people who exercise five to six times per week are less likely to need medication to help them sleep than those who don't. The trick is finding the right type of exercise so you end up tired not wired.

"Training in order to burn as many calories as possible involves using as many muscles as you can in one go," says personal trainer and Bootcamp Pilates instructor Alex Castro. "This can stress out your body, which can make getting yourself comfortable for sleep very difficult. Instead, try an exercise such as Pilates, which teaches you to engage certain muscles while relaxing others, to avoid overburdening your body."

I sign up for an evening reformer Pilates session, and I'm suitably exhausted by the time it's over. As a calming boost before bed, I try Alex's Pilates-style breathing technique. "Take big inhales to fill up the lungs and spread the ribcage, exhaling deeply to empty the lungs of all the bad air. This helps bring your heart rate down to a relaxed pace, ensuring you fall into a deeper, more energising sleep," he explains. I drift off while doing this, and don't wake until my alarm goes off at 7am the next morning.

### UPGRADE YOUR SLEEP QUALITY WITH THESE TOP APPS

- If you can't switch off, download **Pzizz** (iTunes).
- Need help waking up? Try **Sleep Cycle** (iTunes).



- Track your sleep-talking and snoring with the **Sleep Talk Recorder** (iTunes, Google Play and Amazon).
- Meditate with the **Headspace** app (iTunes, Google Play and Amazon).
- Try **f.lux** (download at [justgetflux.com](http://justgetflux.com)) to give your computer screen a more relaxing glow.

launch, I'm looking forward to winding down with friends over dinner. I have two glasses of red wine so decide to counteract the sleep-disrupting effects of alcohol with calm-inducing rituals. Before climbing under the sheets, I jot down my thoughts from the day so they don't interrupt my attempt to zonk out, then I settle into a DIY de-stressing treatment from the Royal College of Psychiatrists called progressive muscle relaxation. It involves tensing and releasing the muscles of your body one at a time, working from your feet upwards to your shoulders, neck and face. Somehow, I still can't nod off. After what seems like two hours of willing myself to "just-fall-asleep!" I decide to follow The Sleep Council's advice: "If you can't sleep, don't lie there worrying about it. Get up and do something you find relaxing until you feel sleepy again,

## THURSDAY

*Give acupuncture a go*

Today I'm achy and slow to get out of bed, but I'm attributing my groggy state to the late-night Pilates class, not a lack of sleep. In a bid to increase my current streak of drifting off quickly, I contact London acupuncturist and author Emma Cannon. "I often find that even my patients who come to me for other issues find their sleep improves after having acupuncture," she

says. The holistic treatment uses very fine needles to stimulate certain points in your body. "It's likely that it improves sleep patterns by releasing endorphins and making you more relaxed," explains Cannon. In my after-work session, I fall asleep on the table within five minutes. Success! But my sleepy state is short-lived, and I'm cold, grumpy and wide awake after the 20-minute Tube ride home. Even so, the session seems to have worked – I sink into a deep slumber a few hours later without my audio crutch.

## FRIDAY

*Oops! I've had too many glasses of wine*

During the night I've briefly woken up twice but still feel rested when I hit my alarm. After a long day spent in meetings and travelling to and from Paris for a skincare

then go back to bed." So I thumb through a copy of *Gone Girl* I've been meaning to read for ages until eventually, at 2am, I crawl back into bed and sleep through until the morning.

## SO DID I GET MORE ZZZS?

By midweek I felt more rested than at the start. Turns out stocking my fridge with cherries, almonds and fish and going to bed (slightly) hungry was key for me. Exercise and an acupuncture session helped me to nod off quickly. What didn't work? My Friday dinner plans broke my solid-sleep streak. I'll never give up a few glasses of wine on a night out, but from now I'll balance that with sleep-friendly routines the rest of the week.



## Trial 2: Lotions, potions and an A-list eye mask

*Beauty writer Jessica Tibbits*

JESSICA'S SLEEP ISSUE:

*"I wake up several times through the night"*

## MONDAY

*Tea and an early bath*

I've always been a night owl, but in the past few months it's got out of hand: I've been falling into an uncomfortable, fitful sleep, then repeatedly hitting snooze in a bleary-eyed state when my alarm goes off at 7am. I'm looking forward to trialling products to see if I can improve my sleep.

First up, I'm trying the traditional method: a hot bath before bed. Lavender is known for its calming effects in aromatherapy, but it can also be consumed, in the form of tea. So while my bath is running, I steep two teaspoons of lavender leaves in a cup of boiling water. I light my Jo Malone Lavender & Lovage Scented Candle (£39, [selfridges.com](http://selfridges.com)), sink into my bath, thick with foam from L'Occitane's Lavender Foaming Bath >