



why *Sleeping Beauty* really is just a fairy tale

Whether snoring, night sweats or bad dreams are spoiling your happy bedtime ending, there are moves that can help break the spell. One ticket to Dreamland coming up...

If *Sleeping Beauty* were set in the real world, Prince Charming would find the princess tangled in her duvet and rocking haywire hair, with a boob falling out the side of her vest top. She might also be snoring, sweating, mumbling and farting (just like the rest of us), though we doubt she'd want that shouted from the castle turrets. Because, according to a study in the *Journal Of Clinical Sleep Medicine*, women under-report snoring,

thanks to social stigma, while a YouGov report found only a quarter of us would see our doc about sleep problems. Even in 2020, we still feel the Sleeping Beauty pressure – a belief that it's more 'ladylike' to be a perfect snoozer.

Well, we're calling time on the fairy tale: we should not be made to feel self-conscious about any of our nocturnal habits! But if some of your slumber issues are genuinely causing you woe or health problems, read on for some magic bedtime strategies...

Sleeping Beauty myth 1

Bad snoring only happens to the kingdom's blokes

If your snoring could wake a dragon (or the neighbours), join the gang: 12.5% of us snore, although it could be more if the aforementioned stigma research is anything to go by. What's going on? Your tongue, mouth, throat and airways in your nose relax and narrow during sleep. As you breathe, they vibrate and can create a sound. Your tongue can fall back, or your mouth can fall open, which further hinders smooth air flow. Intriguingly, research suggests that although oestrogen and progesterone can protect some women from snoring, it can also cause a predisposition to the condition. 'I find a lot of women present [with snoring] later in life, when these hormones have reduced during the peri- and post-menopausal periods,' says Dr Sara McNeillis, sleep and anaesthesia consultant at UCLH's ENT Snoring and Sleep Disorder Clinic.

Your sleep-fairy godmother says:

If snoring's disrupting your sleep (or your bed buddy's), you're feeling tired or exhausted during the day, or if you've been told you're making gasping/choking noises, see your GP to rule out sleep apnoea – this disorder can lead to high blood pressure and other issues if it's not dealt with. Booze, smoking, extra kilos and back-sleeping can all boost your likelihood of snoring.

'Try videoing yourself with your phone for clues,' says Dr McNeillis. Is your mouth open? What position are you in? 'If you snore worse on your back, it could be that your tongue is falling back and closing off that airflow,' she explains. In that case, speak to your doctor, who can

provide you with suitable treatment options. Consider some self-help, too, with Snoreeze Snoring Relief Throat Spray, £10.50/1,050 points (23.5ml). The Soundly Reduce Snoring app uses games to exercise the upper airway (a University of Minnesota study found users reduced their snoring rate by 22%). And consider treating bae to Boots Soft Silicone Earplugs **EXCLUSIVE** £4.69/469 points (3 pairs)!

Sleeping Beauty myth 2

We hardly break a (k)night sweat

Forget a wake-up smooch: many of us would prefer a towel, fan and fresh nightie. One US study found 41% of people experienced night sweats in a month. They can be driven by anxiety, medications (including some antidepressants), alcohol, low blood sugar and even an excessive-sweating condition called hyperhidrosis.

An after-dark drenching can also strike if you're menopausal (75% of women get hot flushes) or post-pregnancy, thanks to hormonal changes that affect your body's temperature control, explains Dr Philippa Kaye, GP and author of *The M Word: Everything You Need to Know About The Menopause* (Summersdale).

Your sleep-fairy godmother says:

See your GP if you think it's linked to anxiety, meds, a health issue, or if you regularly wake with soaking sheets for no reason – the latter could indicate an underlying condition, warns Dr Kaye, especially if you also have unexplained weight loss. Postnatal sweats usually ease after a few weeks, as your hormones settle. Be prepared, with light cotton clothes, keeping the bedroom cool and having a glass of water beside your bed.

Menopausal? Grab some dumbbells – Swedish researchers reckon three resistance workouts a week may help combat night sweats. Also, a study in the NAMS journal *Menopause* suggests cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) – which teaches practical coping strategies – may help with hot flushes and disturbed sleep. Ask your doc about meds and Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) to help manage symptoms, too. Avoid sweat triggers, such as caffeine and alcohol, and try cooling remedies, like layers on your bed (so you can move the duvet but have a top sheet to ward off chill). Consider the JML Chillmax Pillow **ONLINE ONLY** £9.99/999 points, which contains cooling gel. →

Sleeping Beauty myth 3

Our sleep is so serene, not even Prince Charming's kiss would rouse us

If the princess had a creeping sensation in her legs, plus a real urge to move them, we bet that would've roused her. These are symptoms of restless leg syndrome (RLS), which can also be associated with leg jerks during sleep. Up to 11% of us are affected, with women twice as likely to develop it.

'RLS may have something to do with the chemical dopamine, which is involved in controlling muscle movement,' says Dr Kaye. 'It can sometimes be related to iron-deficiency anaemia and kidney [problems], plus one in five pregnant women will also have symptoms [in the third trimester], although it generally disappears within four weeks of the birth.'

Your sleep-fairy godmother says:

Check with your GP to see whether symptoms could be linked to a treatable health issue, such as iron deficiency, or any meds you're taking. 'Exercise and staying hydrated can help,' says Dr Kaye. 'Avoid stimulants, such as alcohol, caffeine and nicotine.' Try a warm bath before bed and hot/cold compresses on your legs during flare-ups.

Charity RLS-UK suggests 'hot-cold contrast therapy' before bed, to increase blood flow to the legs: have a five-minute shower, alternating 20 seconds of cold water and 10 seconds of warm water, then spend a final few minutes relaxing under warm water.

Do seek advice about any symptom concerns from your GP and check out rls-uk.org for support.

Sleeping Beauty myth 4

We only dream of handsome princes

Whether you're plagued by scary scenarios or wicked witches (like the colleague who loves a pass-agg email), dreams aren't always happily-ever-after territory. 'They can be made up of anything you know, can imagine or have experienced,' says Dr Neil Stanley, director of sleep science at NHS-approved programme Sleepstation. 'For some, a nightmare can be a reliving of a traumatic event.' For others, bad dreams can be linked to certain meds, health conditions and even everyday stress. Anxiety-inducing ones (running late no matter what you do, standing on stage naked) can be a reminder to tackle everyday stress in your waking life.

Your sleep-fairy godmother says...

If dreams are troubling you, talk to your GP as a starting

dream lovers

Nearly two-thirds of us have been inspired by a sex dream to try something new. And here's who stars in our snooze fantasies:

A friend 34% An ex 32%
An IRL crush 16% A celeb 14%
Someone we don't fancy (or didn't before, anyway...) 4%

59%

of sleep talking is undecipherable, according to a study in the journal *Sleep*. No need to worry about confessing your deepest, darkest secrets! This habit is still a bit of a mystery, but thought to be harmless. (That said, the researchers also heard lots of sleepy swearing...)

point. French research suggests people who wake a lot during the night are more likely to recall dreams. 'Look at what's disturbing your sleep – pain, anxiety, your bed partner – and figure out how you can stop it,' says Dr Stanley. Prioritise quality sleep with regular hours and a wind-down routine *sans* caffeine (try a decaf alternative such as Pukka Organic Night Time*, £2.39/239 points, 20 sachets) and no alcohol.

As for the content of your dreams? Snooze boffins are intrigued by 'lucid dreaming' – a state where the dreamer *knows* they're dreaming, which can enable them to control what happens. It takes practice, but a University of Adelaide study found people increased their likelihood of lucid dreaming by waking up after five hours, then repeating, 'The next time I'm dreaming, I will remember that I'm dreaming' as they drifted off again. Worth a go!

*Available on boots.com and in selected stores.