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Mental Health Awareness Month: how to get your foundations right with good breathing and sleep

Hi-tech home air-filter systems and the use of merino wool sleepware and bedding are two ways we can safeguard a cleaner indoor environment and ensure a good night’s rest



Lim Li Ying


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Hong Kong residents, who live in one of the most polluted – and high density cities – in the world, are reminded of the benefits of a clean, healthy living environment on a daily basis.

Breathing and sleeping are two very basic human needs that we hardly ever get right in today’s fast-paced living situations.

“You can sleep when you’re dead” is one of those sayings we’ve often heard, yet a growing number of people have joined the vanguard promoting the importance of breathing right and sleeping well.

The benefits these two things can bring to wellness are under the spotlight in May, the month which features many international annual mental health awareness campaigns, including Mental Health Awareness Month, in the United States.

Falling asleep faster and remaining longer in a deep sleep allow us to recuperate better and feel more rejuvenated and productive the next day

Indi McCullough

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Sleeping beauty



Sleep specialist Kate Bridle (left) with Indi McCullough, founder and CEO of Shleep, the bedding and sleepware company. Photo: Lim Li Ying

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A good night’s sleep in hot, humid – and often noisy – Hong Kong is not always easy.

“One of the things about sleeping better is temperature regulation, so the stuff that we sleep in – and on – are really important,” says Kate Bridle, a sleep specialist at Balance Health, a clinic in Central, Hong Kong, which offers patients alternative treatments and therapies.

Bridle is an internationally certified sleep physiologist and sleep coach, who cut her teeth at London’s Guy’s and St Thomas’ National Health Service Hospital Trust, which runs one of Britain most prestigious sleep disorder clinics.

“There are lots of sleep improvement devices out there, but there is no real evidence that [they] work. [But] we know that regulating the temperature is definitely important for sleep.”

Scientific studies have shown that bedding using natural fibres such fine merino wool can help to lull people to sleep 25 per cent faster compared with bedding using synthetic or cotton products.



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Kate Bridle, sleep specialist, Balance Health



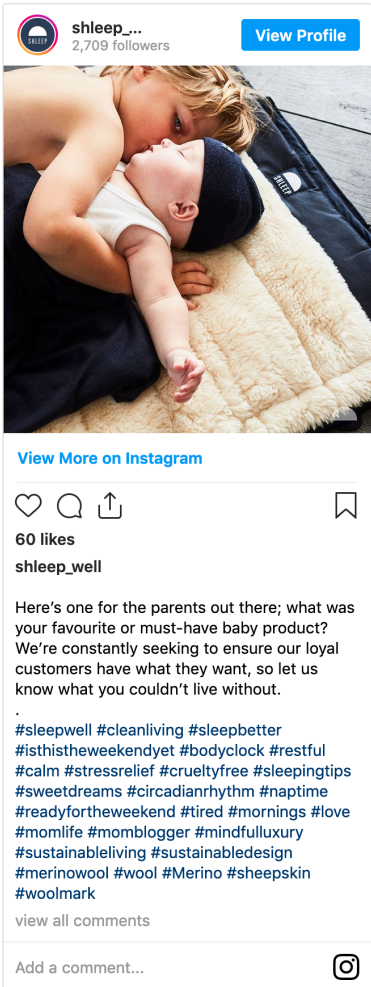
Bridle says: “A lot of the work I do with individuals is to help them get off medication to fall asleep naturally.

“After one or two weeks, you have to take more [sleeping pills] to get the same effects, and the pills are very addictive to start with.

They are also on sedatives, and being sedated is not the same as being asleep.

“When we sleep we have two important stages – the REM [rapid-eye-movement] sleep and deep, non-REM sleep. The deep non-REM sleep is primarily for detoxification and physical restoration and DNA repair, which helps us wake up looking fresh.

“The REM sleep is important for creativity, mental and emotional processing.”



Enter Indi McCullough, founder and CEO of Shleep, the bedding and sleepware brand.

McCullough says: “Falling asleep faster and remaining in a deep sleep longer allows us to recuperate better and feel more rejuvenated and productive the next day.

“So I delved deeper and found that Australian merino wool is called a ‘miracle fibre’ with a lot of attributes which are good for sleep.

“It’s an insulator against heat and cold; it reacts to the body temperature; and it absorbs 35 per cent of its own weight in water, so if you perspire you’re not going to feel like it’s wet, and you feel comfortable throughout the night.”

[How Chopard’s new eco-friendly fragrances pay homage to paradise](#)

That means it will work for the humid summers in Hong Kong, too – which is a godsend, now that Shleep is available in the city at Lane Crawford.



Shleep, which positions itself as a wellness brand, is looking at venturing out to produce sleeping masks to block out sound and light for the best quality sleep possible.

McCullough says: “Everyone seems to be getting to understand that sleep is really important and now it’s about how you can give people what they need to help them sleep better. It’s still such an untapped market.”

Other ways of improving sleep, include cognitive behavioural therapy, which Bridle says is a “long-lasting treatment for insomnia”.

She says: “It’s often for people who have lost their confidence for sleep. They become very obsessive with their sleep rituals and overthink sleep and try too hard to sleep.

“It’s about getting to the bottom of their feelings about sleep and using psychological techniques to change them. It also affects your physiology and biology,” Bridle says.

“And of course, your diet and exercise, your lifestyle choices.”

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