infinite health concepts

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Why you wake at 3am

and what to do when it happens

If you wake around 3am with your mind already racing, you're in good company. It's one of the most common things women tell me. And it isn't random.

What's happening in your body

1. **Your stress system switches on too early.** In the early hours your body starts making more cortisol to get you ready for the day. After months of stress, it comes too early and too much.
2. **Your blood sugar dips.** Overnight your blood sugar slowly drops. If it dips too low, your body releases stress hormones to bring it back up, and that can wake you. A light dinner or a glass of wine can add to this.
3. **Your sleep is lighter by 3am.** Most deep sleep happens in the first half of the night. By 3am you're in lighter sleep, so it takes much less to wake you: a noise, a hot flush or a passing thought.
4. **Your hormones are shifting.** In your 40s and 50s, falling progesterone (which has a calming effect) and changing oestrogen can make sleep lighter and bring on night sweats.

Put together, your body is on night shift when it should be resting. That's your nervous system, not a lack of willpower.

What to try at 3am

- **Don't check the time.** Clock-watching starts the mental maths and wakes you up even more.
- **Breathe out longer than you breathe in.** In for 4, out for 6 to 8. A longer out-breath tells your body it's safe to settle. Keep going for a few minutes.
- **Park the thoughts.** Jot down what's going round in your head on a notepad by the bed. Your mind lets go once it knows it won't forget.
- **Play your wind-down audio.** Pop in one earbud, press play and just listen.
- **Still awake after 20 minutes or so?** Get up, sit somewhere dim and do something quiet and boring until you feel sleepy, then go back to bed.

When it keeps happening

If you've been waking most nights for weeks, these tips can take the edge off, but they won't change what's underneath. That's the work I do with clients: calming the nervous system with hypnotherapy and practical breathwork, alongside naturopathic support with nutrition and herbs.

If this sounds like where you're at, book a free exploration session at infinitehealth.net.au

General information only, not medical advice. If your sleep changes suddenly, please check in with your GP.

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