

# The Importance of Sleep

It is important to maintain good sleeping habits to support positive physical and mental wellbeing and there are a number of things you can do from home to help improve your sleep. The following points are based on recommendations from The National Sleep Foundation, The Mental Health Foundation and The World Sleep Society.



Adapted from: The World Sleep Society (2020). 10 Tips for Better Sleep. [Online]. Available from: <https://worldsleepday.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/10-Tips-for-Better-Sleep-Graphic.jpg> [Accessed 9 April 2020].

# The Importance of Sleep - Routines

In addition to routines supporting our mental wellbeing, routines can also help us sleep better. It is recommended that most adults should sleep on average between 7 and 9 hours per night and having/following a routine can help us achieve this.



Sticking to a sleep schedule helps regulate our body clock which in turn can help us to fall asleep and stay asleep for the night. Keep to a routine of going to bed and waking up at the same time, even at the weekend.



Have a relaxing bedtime routine. This can help separate your sleep time from other activities that can cause excitement, stress or anxiety which can make it difficult to fall asleep, get a sound and deep sleep or remain asleep.



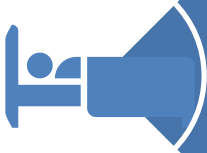
Avoid electronics for 1-2 hours before going to bed. The backlit 'blue light' can suppress melatonin production which is the hormone that helps us sleep. Suppression of this can cause sleep disruption.



Exercising regularly is thought to help sleep as it can reduce anxiety and relieve stress. Create an exercise routine and try to do this earlier in the day rather than just before bed. Exercising increases the body's adrenaline production which can make it more difficult to sleep if done just before bed.

# The Importance of Sleep – Relax

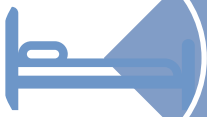
Relaxing before bed is important to help us 'wind down' and have a comfortable sleep. If we compromise on our sleep this can, in turn, compromise on our performance, mood and relationships.



A comfortable bedroom and bed helps us to relax and sleep. Keeping our bedrooms for sleep and separating them from work helps our mind to relax and attribute this room to sleep.



Your bedroom should be cool and free from any noise or light that could disturb your sleep. If you need help in drowning out noise or light, try using ear plugs or an eye mask. Equally so, if you still have a thick winter quilt on, change to a thinner, summer quilt to help keep you cool.



If your sleep is disrupted due to the comfort of your mattress or pillows look online for alternative such as a mattress topper and new pillows/support.



If you can't get to sleep, go into another room and do something relaxing until you feel tired such as meditation or practicing mindfulness techniques.

# The Importance of Sleep - Reduce

Lifestyle choices can negatively or positively affect the quality of our sleep. Reducing the consumption and use of certain items can improve the body's ability to relax and improve your sleep.



If you have trouble sleeping, try to avoid naps, especially in the afternoon as this may help you to form a routine and improved sleep schedule.



Whilst alcohol can make you feel tired, it often impairs the quality of sleep. Drinking alcohol is more likely to cause you to wake up during the night as its effects wear off and you may need to go to the toilet more frequently, or drink water if you are dehydrated. Try to reduce your alcohol intake and avoid it before bed.



Food and drink containing lots of caffeine or sugar can keep you awake. Try to reduce the amount of tea, coffee, chocolate and other sugary foods and fizzy drinks you consume late in the day.



Reduce the amount you eat before bedtime. Eating big or spicy meals can cause discomfort and indigestion that can make it hard to sleep. If you are hungry before bed, try having a light snack 45 minutes before bedtime and avoid eating large meals for 2-3 hours before bed.

# The Importance of Sleep - Resources

The following links provide further information and access to online resources to help improve your sleep:

- The Mental Health Foundation - <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/>
- Sleepio - <https://www.sleepio.com/work/nhs/#/?k=xwmw29>
- British Snoring and Sleep Apnoea Association
- Be Mindful - <https://bemindful.co.uk/>
- British Sleep Society
- NHS - <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/how-to-get-to-sleep/>
- The National Sleep Foundation - <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/>
- The National Sleep Foundation Sleep Diary - <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/SleepDiaryv6.pdf>

Online platforms such as Google, YouTube and smart phone apps, can give you access to mindfulness and meditation videos and apps to help with sleep.