

# Sleep

**There is growing evidence that poor sleep is associated with poor physical and mental health. So what can we do to get a better nights sleep?**

## **1. Sleep hygiene**

- Have a fixed time for going to bed and waking up and avoid sleeping in after a poor night's sleep
- Do relaxing activities before bed
- Create a comfortable sleeping environment
- Avoid daytime naps
- Avoid caffeine, nicotine and alcohol
- Daytime exercise (avoid vigorous exercise in the 4 hours before bed)
- Avoid eating a heavy meal late at night
- Avoid clock watching
- Avoid late night technology (phones, games consoles, TV etc)

## **2. Retrain you sleeping habits**

- Allow your mind to associate your bed only with sleep
- Avoid lying in bed when you are not sleepy (get up and do something calming and then return to bed when you feel sleepy)
- Keep electronics out of the bedroom
- Avoid doing anything that is too stimulating or interesting

## **3. Manage your own expectations about sleep**

- You don't need to get a certain number of hours sleep to feel refreshed
- Try not to panic about getting back to sleep
- Use a sleep diary (see example below)

## **4. Meditation and relaxation**

- Read a book
- Have a bath
- Listen to relaxing music
- Gentle exercise such as yoga
- Mindfulness/controlled breathing
- Sleep stories via apps such as Calm, Headspace

## **5. Put the worries aside**

- Use a notebook to write down your problems/worries to get them off your mind
- Tackle any problems that can be sorted during daylight hours so that they are not on your mind at night
- You can cope better than you think with less sleep!

## **6. Sleep restriction: Limit the time you spend in bed each night and gradually lengthen this to discover your optimum bedtime and sleep schedule**

**Further resources:**

<https://thesleepcharity.org.uk/national-sleep-helpline/> Call the helpline on: 03303 530541

<https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-wellbeing-tips/how-to-fall-asleep-faster-and-sleep-better/>

Example of a sleep diary:

**Date:**

What time did you go to bed last night?

What time did you turn the lights out?

How long did it take for you to drop off to sleep?

After falling asleep, how many times did you wake up in the night?

How long did you sleep in total last night (record in hours – e.g. 5 hours 30 minutes)?

If you found it difficult to sleep, what did you do while you were awake?

What time did you wake up in the morning?

What time did you get up?

How long did you spend in bed in total last night (including time spent awake)?

How long did you spend asleep last night?

On a scale of 1–10, how would you rate the quality of your sleep last night?  
(1=poor, 10=excellent)

How many drinks containing caffeine did you drink yesterday (e.g. tea, coffee, fizzy drinks)? How many after 6pm?

How much alcohol did you drink yesterday?

Did you have any naps during the day yesterday?

How many and for how long were you asleep?

How much moderate to vigorous exercise did you carry out yesterday? (e.g. swimming, brisk walking, dancing, aerobics, gardening)

Did you take any sleeping tablets last night?

Did you take any other drugs? If yes, which ones?

Did you have any stresses or other problems yesterday?

Anything else important?