

How to get a good night's sleep

Virtual self-help guide

Sleep has a very big impact on our wellbeing. When we have too little sleep, or an irregular sleeping pattern, it can negatively affect our concentration, focus and memory. If you are tired or have been deprived of sleep, it is much harder for you to solve problems, link ideas together, and you can often feel quite down in the dumps as well.

But what can you do to help? Unfortunately your sleep is very unlikely to just improve overnight (pun definitely intended). You need to try and develop a good sleep hygiene routine – little changes to try and improve your overall quality of sleep.

Over the next few pages will be some useful tips, suggestions and resources on ways to get a better night's sleep but remember, it can take a few weeks to get into a new routine.

TEN TIPS FOR A BETTER NIGHT'S SLEEP

1. GET INTO A ROUTINE - AIM TO GO TO BED AT THE SAME TIME EACH NIGHT AND SET AN ALARM TO WAKE UP AT THE SAME TIME EACH MORNING. DOING THIS WILL ALTER YOUR NATURAL 'BODY CLOCK' AND HOPEFULLY HELP YOU GET BETTER SLEEP EACH NIGHT.

2. AVOID CAFFEINE AFTER 5PM - AVOID DRINKING COFFEE, TEA OR DRINKS HIGH IN CAFFEINE SUCH AS COCA COLA OR ENERGY DRINKS AFTER 5PM. THESE ARE STIMULANTS WHICH WILL KEEP YOU AND YOUR BODY AWAKE. IF YOU LIKE A CUP OF TEA OR COFFEE BEFORE BED, SWITCH TO DECAFF AFTER 5PM.

3. AVOID EATING FOR 2 HOURS BEFORE TRYING TO SLEEP - IF YOU EAT JUST BEFORE BED, EVEN IF YOU FEEL YOU HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DRIFT OFF TO SLEEP, YOUR BODY IS STILL AWAKE AND WORKING HARD TO DIGEST YOUR FOOD. THIS WILL IMPACT ON THE QUALITY OF YOUR SLEEP.

4. MAKE YOUR BED A PLACE OF SLEEP ONLY - AS A STUDENT, IT'S HARD TO USE YOUR BEDROOM FOR SLEEPING ONLY HOWEVER, DURING THE DAY SIT AT YOUR DESK OR OUT IN THE COMMUNAL AREAS. IF YOU USE YOUR BED FOR SLEEP ONLY, YOUR BODY WILL ASSOCIATE IT WITH GETTING READY FOR SLEEP.

5. AVOID STIMULATING ACTIVITIES JUST BEFORE SLEEP - THIS INCLUDES PLAYING COMPUTER GAMES, WATCHING SCARY MOVIES OR LISTENING TO LOUD MUSIC. ALL OF THESE ACTIVITIES WILL STIMULATE YOUR MIND, KEEPING YOU AWAKE AND ALERT.

TEN TIPS FOR A BETTER NIGHT'S SLEEP

6. EXERCISE DURING THE DAY - BEING ACTIVE DURING THE DAY WILL HELP YOUR BODY FEEL MORE TIRED WHEN IT COMES TO GOING TO SLEEP. TRY JOINING THE GYM, TAKE UP A SPORT OR GO FOR A BRISK WALK IN THE AFTERNOON.

7. HAVE A WIND-DOWN ROUTINE - HAVE A MILKY DRINK, A NICE BATH, LISTEN TO SOME CALMING MUSIC OR EVEN PRACTICE SOME RELAXATION TECHNIQUES BEFORE TRYING TO SLEEP. IF YOU COMPLETE THE SAME WIND-DOWN ACTIVITIES BEFORE BED EACH NIGHT, YOUR BODY WILL BEGIN TO ASSOCIATE THESE WITH GETTING READY FOR SLEEP.

8. AVOID NAPPING DURING THE DAY - NO MATTER HOW TIRED YOU ARE, TRY TO AVOID NAPPING DURING THE DAY. IF YOU STRUGGLE TO DRIFT OFF TO SLEEP, THEN NAPPING WILL KEEP THIS PROBLEM GOING, MAKING IT HARDER FOR YOU TO GET TO SLEEP AT NIGHT.

9. DON'T LAY IN BED IF YOU CAN'T SLEEP - IF YOU ARE FINDING IT DIFFICULT TO GET TO SLEEP, THEN TOSSING AND TURNING IN BED, WATCHING THE CLOCK OR JUST LYING THERE OFTEN DOES NOT HELP. GET OUT OF BED FOR 10 MINUTES AND MOVE INTO A DIFFERENT ROOM, STRETCH YOUR LEGS OR HAVE A SMALL GLASS OF WATER, THEN GO BACK TO BED AND TRY AGAIN. TRY TO AVOID TURNING ON BRIGHT LIGHTS OR DOING ANY STIMULATING ACTIVITIES AS THESE WILL MAKE YOU FEEL EVEN MORE AWAKE.

10. AVOID DRINKING TOO MUCH ALCOHOL - EVEN IF YOU FEEL YOU CAN EASILY GET TO SLEEP WHEN YOU HAVE HAD A DRINK OR TWO, ALCOHOL IS AFFECTING THE QUALITY OF YOUR SLEEP. IT IMPACTS ON YOUR SLEEP CYCLE MEANING YOUR BODY IS LESS ABLE TO RESTORE ITSELF DURING THE NIGHT. IT ALSO MEANS AFTER ONLY A COUPLE OF HOURS, YOU GO INTO THE REM STAGE OF SLEEP, WHICH IS MUCH EASIER TO WAKE UP FROM.

Sleep Diary

Use the sleep diary below to help you identify anything you may be doing that is affecting your sleep, both in a negative and positive way. This diary is over 5 days, but you may need to monitor your sleep for a couple of weeks to notice a pattern.

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
What time did I go to bed?					
Did I have any naps in the day?					
How was my overall mood?					
What did I do just before bed?					
What time did I wake up?					
Did I exercise in the day?					
When was my last meal?					
When was my last alcoholic drink?					
When was my last caffeinated drink?					
Have I relaxed at all today and how?					
Did my phone go off in the night and did I answer it?					

Useful Resources



This YouTube video by watchwellcast explores some of the effects poor sleep can have on you both physically and mentally, and also offers some useful tips on how to get better sleep.



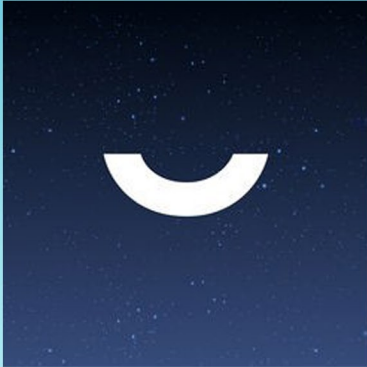
Click [HERE](#) to complete the NHS 'Sleep Self-Assessment tool'



Click [HERE](#) to read the MIND guide on 'How to Cope with Sleep Problems'

Useful Apps

(Free apps with optional in-app purchases)



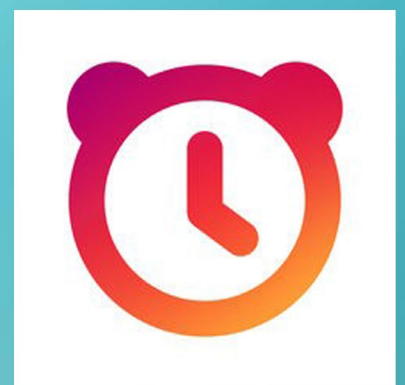
Pzizz (free) - combination of music, sound effects and voice-over tracks. Featuring original compositions, binaural beats, and neuro linguistic programming techniques, Pzizz creates an unlimited variety of personalised soundscapes to promote relaxation, power-napping and better sleep. Available on iOS and Android.

Calm – Relax with Calm, a simple mindfulness meditation app that can help bring more clarity and peace of mind into your life. Available on iOS and Android.



Headspace – Meditation made simple. Guided meditations suitable for all levels. Meditation can help improve your focus, exercise mindful awareness, relieve anxiety and reduce stress. Available on iOS and Android.

Alarmy: Sleep If You Can – This app is an alarm app for students which requires users to complete small tasks (such as taking a photo of something specific or shaking the phone up and down a number of times) before the alarm turns itself off. Available on iOS and Android.





Drop-in:

Monday-Friday between 12-2pm
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