

## **Sleeping Well and Sleep Hygiene**

Good sleep is essential to our mental and physical health and essential to what we achieve day to day and our overall quality of life. We want to support you in maintaining a healthy sleep pattern and we do this via the use of sleep hygiene approaches.

Sleep hygiene is less complicated than it seems – it's basically a set of habits that we can all use to improve our sleep and keep it in a healthy routine.

Good sleep hygiene means having both a bedroom environment and daily routines that promote consistent, uninterrupted sleep. Keeping a stable sleep schedule, making your bedroom comfortable and free of disruptions, following a relaxing pre-bed routine, and building healthy habits during the day can all contribute to ideal sleep hygiene.

If you feel you are sleeping poorly and you would like some help, please talk to us and we will support you with this.

## **Sleep Hygiene Routines**

There are a few things you can do as part of a healthy routine:

### **Sleep at regular times**

First of all, keep regular sleeping hours. This programmes the brain and internal body clock to get used to a set routine.

Most adults need between 6 and 9 hours of sleep every night. By working out what time you need to wake up, you can set a regular bedtime schedule.

It is also important to try and wake up at the same time every day. While it may seem like a good idea to try to catch up on sleep after a bad night, doing so on a regular basis can also disrupt your sleep routine.

### **Make sure you wind down (30-60 minutes before you go to bed)**

Winding down is a critical stage in preparing for bed. There are lots of ways to relax:

- a warm bath (not hot) will help your body reach a temperature that's ideal for rest
- writing "to do" lists for the next day can organise your thoughts and clear your mind of any distractions
- relaxation exercises, such as light yoga stretches to help to relax the muscles. Do not exercise vigorously, as it will have the opposite effect
- mindfulness exercises which focus on your breathing – to help you relax and fall asleep
- relaxation CDs work by using a carefully narrated script, gentle hypnotic music and sound effects to relax you
- reading a book or listening to soothing programmes (such as stories or quiet music) on the radio relaxes the mind by distracting it
- there are a number of apps designed to help with sleep. See the Useful Information section for where to find these
- avoid using smartphones, tablets or other electronic devices for an hour or so before you go to bed as the light from the screen on these devices may have a negative effect on sleep

### **Make your bedroom sleep-friendly**

Your bedroom should be a relaxing environment. Experts claim there's a strong association in people's minds between sleep and the bedroom.

However, certain things weaken that association, such as TVs and other electronic gadgets, light, noise, and a bad mattress or bed. A visible clock face as well can be distracting so try to keep your clock face concealed so you don't feel the urge to check it.

Your bedroom ideally needs to be dark, quiet, tidy and be kept at a temperature of between 18C and 24C. Consider using a sleep mask if you find it hard to darken your room and if you're disturbed by noise, think about using earplugs. Have a lamp next to your bed with a dim lightbulb – instead of a bright overhead light which will reduce production of melatonin which helps you sleep.

### **Keep a sleep diary**

It can be a good idea to keep a sleep diary. It may uncover lifestyle habits or daily activities that contribute to your sleeplessness.

A sleep diary can also reveal underlying conditions that explain your insomnia, such as stress or medication.

If you would like any help with keeping a sleep diary, please let us know and we will support you with this.

### **Avoid certain food and drink**

Make sure you don't go to bed too full or having drunk a large amount of liquid beforehand. On the other hand, going to bed hungry or thirsty won't help you sleep either!

Alcohol is a sedative so it will get you off to sleep but your sleep through the night will be fragile and shallow and you will not feel rested in the morning.

Caffeine is a stimulant so that will affect your sleep too, especially if you have it in the 8 hours prior to going to bed.

### **Try not to smoke just before going to bed**

Nicotine is also a stimulant and will affect your sleep if you smoke just before bed.

### **Useful Information**

There is a lot of information available online but to get you started, here are a few suggestions.

[www.sleepstation.org.uk](http://www.sleepstation.org.uk)

[www.sleepcouncil.org.uk](http://www.sleepcouncil.org.uk)

[www.thesleepcharity.org.uk](http://www.thesleepcharity.org.uk)

NHS Sleep apps – easiest to find via google search  
Headspace.com (mindfulness)  
Sleep as Android app