

# GETTING A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP



## How do I get off to sleep?

- 1. General Habits.** Get regular exercise. Eat a balanced diet, and try to avoid being overweight. Do not smoke - cut down if you do smoke. Avoid excessive alcohol. Stay clear of illicit drugs. Note the side-effects of any medications that you are taking, in case they affect your sleep.

Try not to drink too much coffee during the day. Set aside part of the day to deal with issues that cause you stress. Depression and anxiety may have major effects on sleep, so make sure that you get help and advice regarding these. Discuss with your doctor any medical factors, such as hormone changes, urinary problems or painful conditions, that may keep you awake.

If possible, apart from a quick nap do not sleep for any period during the day. Have a regular time for going to bed, and a regular time for waking up. Your sleep may be affected if you are working and have to work long hours or night-shifts, if you have a stressful job, or if you do a lot of travelling as part of your daily routine.

If you play computer games late at night or listen to fast-beat music, this may also affect your sleep. Keeping a diary of your good and bad sleep days may help to find a pattern that gives you clues to work on.

- 2. Your bed and bedroom.** Make sure your bed and pillow are comfortable. Ensure that there is not too much light or noise coming into the room.

Avoid having a television, radio or computer in the room. If do you have a computer or television in your room, avoid leaving them on throughout the night. Make sure your bed and your bedroom are not too hot or too cold, and that your night clothes are comfortable.

- 3. Before you go to bed.** Avoid any heavy meal or much alcohol in the hours before you go to bed, but a light snack is fine. Do not drink lots of fluid in the 1-2 hours before you go to bed, as you are more likely to want to wake up in the middle of the night to go to the toilet.

Do not smoke or drink coffee shortly before going to bed, but a warm milky drink with a light snack may be a useful habit to try. It can help to unwind and relax in the hour before you go to bed – perhaps listen to gentle music. You could also watch goldfish for 10-15 minutes, either real fish in a bowl or an artificial display on a computer screen.

Some people find that it helps to regularly have a hot shower before they go to bed. Try to get into a standard routine in the hour before you go to bed, as your mind will associate this routine with a good night's sleep. If you are not at all tired near bed-time, wait for a little while till you do feel tired.

**4. When in bed.** Avoid watching TV, eating, listening to the radio, using your mobile phone, or working on a laptop computer when you are in bed. Keep your bed for sleeping – this may also help you fall asleep. If you have a partner, and he / she is affecting your sleep, for example by snoring, see if their problem can be treated, otherwise you may find you have to sleep in separate rooms.

## How do I get back to sleep if I wake up in the middle of the night or early in the morning?

**1. Find a reason.** If there is a specific reason for waking up, try to deal with the cause of this...if you have to go the toilet, are in pain, are too cold or too hot, have things on your mind, etc see if you can find ways for dealing with this. If you have particular worries on your mind, write them down on a pen and pad that you could keep next to your bedside, and deal with them the next day.

**2. Relax.** Do not panic if you wake up in the middle of the night. Stay calm, and try to relax for 20-30 minutes. This may take the form of saying reassuring things to yourself – that you *will* get back to sleep in a short while, taking deep breaths, picturing a relaxing scene, humming a relaxing tune to yourself, etc.

If you wake up less than a couple of hours before your normal waking time, it may be best to carry on with your normal morning routine and spend part of the morning doing some light reading, listening to music or watching TV. If you find that exercise relaxes you, then you might think of going for an early morning jog.

**3. Try things that have worked in the past.** If after 20-30 minutes you are still awake, you could get up for a short while, and do anything that in the past has helped you get off to sleep at night – having a warm drink and light snack, listening to soft music, having a hot shower, etc.

***This leaflet was produced on the basis of clinical experience and published research. The advice in this leaflet needs to be considered in the context of each person's individual circumstances, and other treatment they may be receiving.***

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