



Feeling tired? Tips for improving sleep hygiene

How much sleep do we need?

The amount of sleep you need will vary with age and stage of life. Around seven to eight hours' sleep is recommended. People tend to range from needing between four to ten hours a night. Find out what works best for you.

What is sleep hygiene?

Sleep hygiene is a variety of different habits and techniques which impact positively on sleep quality. Good sleep hygiene is important for both physical and mental health. It can also improve productivity and overall quality of life. In order to get the best out of your treatment with us, it is important that you try to follow the 'Ten steps' overleaf as part of your care. Sleeping well is the foundation to so many human functions.

Sleep and mental health

Stress and anxiety can affect how we get to sleep. If you have sleep problems, you can also develop anxiety about going to sleep, therefore making sleep patterns worse. We can also fixate on the time, which can increase our anxiety.

Depression. People with depression are more likely to wake up in the night. Depression can also lead to oversleeping – this may include sleeping late into the morning, or napping. Oversleeping can cause fatigue and lethargy, making it difficult to sleep at night.

Prescribed Medication such as anti-depressants can also affect how we sleep. If you are worried talk to your GP or care professional.

Helplines

NHS Direct – Freephone 111

Sleep matters Insomnia Helpline – 020 8994 9874

Mental Health Matters – 0800 616171

There are also many smart-phone apps available.

Sleep Checklist



- I have a regular routine
- The place where I sleep is comfortable
- My bedroom is dark enough
- I avoid using my phone and tablet in my bedroom
- I make sure I am relaxed before I try and sleep
- I have had some natural light during the day
- I have a healthy and balanced diet, and have avoided caffeine and alcohol before bed

10 simple steps to improve sleep hygiene

1. Being comfortable

Make sure you are comfortable – ensure the temperature, light and noise levels are right for you. On the whole, dark, quiet, cool environments tend to lead to better quality sleep. If your bedroom has street light or sunlight creeping in, consider wearing an eye mask. If you can make out objects when your room is dark, it may be too light. The ideal room temperature is 18 - 20°C.

2. The role of your bedroom

Try to use your bed only for sleeping, reading or time with your partner. Try to avoid using phones or tablets in bed. This way you will learn to associate your bedroom with sleeping, which will lead to better quality sleep. Tests have shown that 24% of people are allergic to dust mites, which can affect sleep. Therefore, try to keep your bedroom tidy, with minimal dust.



3. Staying hydrated

Stay hydrated by drinking approximately three litres of fluid per day. This could be made up of water, squash, juice, tea, coffee etc. Try to finish your drink at least one hour before bed, otherwise you may find yourself waking up to go to the toilet. See point 5 for more details.



4. Electronic screens

The blue light in screens such as TVs, mobiles, games consoles etc. can trick our bodies into thinking its daylight and time to be alert. Try to avoid using screens at least one to two hours before bed. If you must use your phone during this time, try setting up the 'night shift'/'blue light filter' setting, which can be set to come on at the same time each evening. This is found under display and brightness.

5. Diet

In the evening try to avoid alcohol, caffeine and nicotine. Whilst alcohol often leads to sleep it doesn't produce the same quality of sleep. Try to avoid or reduce caffeine consumption for at least four to five hours before you intend to go to sleep as caffeinated drinks such as tea, coffee and cola are stimulants which keep you awake.



6. Relaxing

Before you go to bed try to 'switch off' from daily worries. Try to do something calming before you go to bed, such as listening to relaxing music, doing something creative, or having a bath. Some people find it relaxing to read a book, but others find that this wakes them up. Experiment and find what works for you.

7. Going to bed

People who sleep best tend to go to bed at the same time each evening. You may need to do this for a few weeks to establish a regular routine. If you can't sleep get out of bed for 30 minutes, then try again.

8. Waking up

Similarly, people who sleep the best tend to wake up at a similar time each morning and get up straight away. This will make you feel better and more energised.



9. Fresh air

There is a connection between exercise, fresh air and a good nights' sleep. Studies have shown that people who exercise regularly are significantly more likely to sleep well most nights.

10. Still feeling tired?

If you're still tired it's ok to catch up on sleep, but try to avoid long naps during the day. It's been shown that the ideal nap time is 30 to 40 minutes.

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