

Sleep



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Problems with sleep

Understanding sleep

This booklet aims to:

Help you understand sleep/sleep problems, finding ways to help you improve your sleep.

As many as 30% of the adult population are affected by sleep problems. Therefore to have trouble sleeping at some point in your life is quite normal.

Sleep is the mysterious shift in consciousness that our bodies require every day. It's vital for our health and well-being. Not only do we function less well when we don't get enough quality sleep, but it can lead to long-term health problems. That's why we need to do all that we can to ensure that we enjoy quality sleep and deal with any sleep problems.

People vary greatly in their need for sleep. Sleep requirements can range from needing 4 hours a night up to needing 10 hours or more. Not only does the need for sleep vary from person to person, and with age, it also varies depending on level of activity. If someone has retired from work, they may be less active and therefore require less sleep. On the other hand, if they have a young family and are constantly on the go, then they may require more sleep.

“Anything that contains caffeine taken near to bedtime, will reduce the quality of sleep...”

What causes sleep problems ?

There are a number of reasons why sleep problems can develop, including...

1. Normal effects of aging – when people get older they tend to sleep less deeply and need less sleep. Often not sleeping becomes a greater cause for worry, frustration and concern, which in turn leads to sleeping less well.
2. Stress, anxiety and worry - sleep is easily affected by how someone is feeling. If someone is worrying about something or suffering from stress, they will very often find it hard to get off to sleep.
3. Surroundings - A bedroom that is too hot or too cold, a bed that is too hard or too soft, a room that is too noisy or too light can all make a big difference to how well someone sleeps.
4. Disrupted sleep routine - people who work shifts which change frequently often have difficulty sleeping.

Try not to worry about not getting enough sleep- it may be that you are getting enough, but it is just less than you expect. Don't take naps during the day to catch up, this will effect your natural rhythm and only add to your problem. Remember that our need for sleep is an individual thing and gets less as we get older.

Good sleep habits: practical steps to a good night's sleep

Your bedroom

If you're having difficulty sleeping one of the first things to look at is your bedroom. You need the right environment to get a good night's sleep and that means a bedroom that's pleasant, inviting and welcoming.

- Keep your room completely dark, if necessary use blackout curtains or an eye mask.
- Make sure your room isn't too hot, keep it slightly cool around 16-18°C (60-65°F).
- Keep clutter out of your room. Put the laundry basket in the spare room, bathroom or landing.
- Adorn your bedroom with beautiful things such as photographs of loved ones, artwork that you like, plants and flowers. It will help you feel more connected to the room and look forward to going to bed.

The foundation of a good sleep is a comfortable bed. The

mattress needs to be firm enough to support your spine in correct alignment-but must also conform to your body's contours. As a rough guide, you should be thinking about replacing your mattress after about seven years.

Don't treat your bedroom as an extension of your living room or a study. Avoid having a television or computer in the bedroom.

Your lifestyle

Often from the moment when we wake up and check our smart phones, life is non-stop. We put on the radio or television to be given the news as and when it happens, we check our emails constantly throughout the day; we sit at our computers and/or watch television late into the evening. It barely stops and it can be difficult to switch off and wind down so it's small wonder many of us have trouble sleeping.

The brain is not designed to pass rapidly from a state of arousal to sleep. Anything exciting, annoying or upsetting is likely to delay the onset of sleep.

- Work and studying take a great deal of concentration and effort. You need at least a couple of hours relaxing or doing something less stimulating before your brain will be ready to sleep.
- Food and drink - anything that contains caffeine taken near to bedtime, will reduce the quality of sleep. Examples include coffee, tea and cola. It is best not to have any of these drinks within four hours of bedtime.

If you are having a bedtime drink try to make sure it is decaffeinated.

- Medicines and other drugs- If you are taking medicine it is worth checking with your pharmacist or doctor. Certain drugs for asthma, migraine, pain relief and cold or flu medication are stimulants. Sleeping tablets, whilst they can help in the short term, often cause sleep problems as they interfere with the quality of sleep and can alter sleep patterns. They should only be taken for very short periods.
- Alcohol - whilst people often feel sleepy after drinking a alcohol. The quality of sleep is affected. It is best to avoid drinking large amounts of alcohol close to bedtime if you are having sleep problems. Ensure you empty your bladder before going to bed.

Your diet

Protein foods like turkey, steak, chicken, pumpkin seeds, beans and milk are composed of amino acids. Tryptophan is present in these foods and when it reaches the brain; it converts to an important chemical called serotonin.

Serotonin is a chemical that carries messages between brain cells and other cells. At night-time, serotonin undergoes metabolic change to become melatonin, the chemical that induces sleep. Melatonin is a hormone that helps regulate the body's circadian rhythm (body clock) and promotes restful sleep. The best way of ensuring optimal melatonin production is to sleep in as dark an environment as possible

and also include foods high in tryptophan in your diet.

Exercise

Exercise can help you enjoy better quality sleep and lower body temperature which also induces better sleep. However, wearing yourself out physically is not particularly likely to induce sleepiness. In fact it can be counter-productive and lead to wakefulness and alertness when trying to sleep.

The important thing is to exercise because it makes you feel fitter and better, and if you are experiencing sleep difficulties, the more you exercise, the more likely you are to improve your sleeping patterns. Regular exercise (taken sensibly, according to your level of fitness) is, of course, good for your overall health and there is increasing evidence that it helps combat stress and improves your mood.

Relaxation and other therapies

Stressful lifestyles, working late, and watching intense TV shows or the news, are some of the factors that can contribute to the mind racing and being unable to wind down. It is essential to understand the importance of being relaxed before bed and apply effective relaxation techniques in order to experience deep restful sleep.

Relax your body

This can be done in bed and works by relaxing separate groups of muscles. It is also effective to visualise each set of

muscles being relaxed as you go through the exercise:

- Start with your feet. Tense the muscles of your feet by contracting and holding for seven-10 seconds. Don't strain the muscle.
- Visualise the muscle being tensed and feel the build-up of tension.
- Release each muscle abruptly, then relax, allowing the body to go limp before going on to the next muscle. Keep all other muscles relaxed whilst working on a particular muscle.
- Move on to muscles in your calves, thighs etc right up to your face.

Breathe

The effects of Deep breathing, can bring about a physiological response in the body. It can normalise the heart rate and help calm you.

As well as relaxing before bed, you can use this breathing exercise whenever anything upsetting happens throughout the day.

It can be done anywhere because you don't have to lie on your back.



1. Sit up with your back straight and place the tip of your tongue just behind your upper front teeth, and keep it there throughout the entire exercise
2. Practice exhaling with your tongue in this position. It will be easier if you purse your lips
3. Now close your mouth and inhale through your nose for four seconds (counting one thousand, two thousand etc.)
4. Hold your breath for seven seconds, then exhale through your mouth, taking eight seconds to exhale completely.
5. Repeat three to four times and try to be accurate with the counting
6. Do this every evening before bed.

Have a regular time to go to bed and to stick to it, if you can't sleep on one particular night, don't worry. Instead, practice a relaxation exercise.

Stress and worry

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is commonly prescribed for depression but clinical trials have shown it is an effective long-term solution for insomniacs.

CBT helps you identify the negative attitudes and beliefs that hinder your sleep, and replaces them with positive thoughts, effectively 'unlearning' the negative beliefs.

When a person has anxious thoughts, their heart rate goes up and in turn the mind starts to 'race'. This happens to someone who worries about something when they're trying to get to sleep. Instead of being calm and subdued, their brains are too aroused to sleep. And to make matters worse, once their brain is stimulated in this way, other worries are activated, making sleep even harder to achieve. As a pattern sets in, sleep becomes a thing of anxiety.

Solution: The following might help. Get out of bed and sit somewhere quiet and comfortable with a pen and paper.

1. Write down the problem(s) you are thinking about
2. Taking each problem, write down everything you can possibly think you might do to solve the problem
3. Choose the most helpful solution and write down all the steps you are going to need to take to do it. Write as much as you can
4. Choose down any obstacles and how you might tackle them
5. When you are finished say to yourself firmly "ok, that's it for now. I can't do any more about it at this time of night. I am not going to let myself worry about it until the morning"
6. Spend at least half an hour winding down, reading a paper or listening to some music. When you start to feel sleepy go back to bed

7. If you still find yourself worrying, keep saying to yourself "I've dealt with my worry for now. Worrying about it now will not help. I'll deal with it tomorrow"
8. If you don't drop off to sleep within 15-30 minutes, get up and do something else relaxing.

The repository of thoughts

Imagine you've had a busy day; no time to think. You get home late, have supper, have a chat and go to bed. At last you have the time and space to review the day and think what is needed for tomorrow. Suddenly you remember some essential task and you are worried that you will forget it by the morning. However hard you try, you can't clear your mind ready for slumber.

The brain is like that. It won't let something rest until it is sorted out or at least pigeon-holed. So pigeon-hole it. Keep a notepad by your bed. Every time a thought or problem comes into your head, write it down also write down a time in the morning when you will work out your plan to sort out each problem.

For example, 7.30-8.00 am sort out problems; (1) agenda for meeting; (2) sort out holiday arrangements; (3) phone bank manager about overdraft.

By putting your thoughts on to paper, you take them out of your brain; but it will continue to worry unless you reassure it with a guarantee of a time when all will be made right. So when 7.30 am comes, you must address your problem list.

30 minute rule

Only go to bed when you're fatigued. If you are not asleep after 30 minutes. Get up and do something else such as listen to relaxing music, make a milky drink, read or do the breathing and muscle relaxing exercises. (It is important you think in advance what you could do if you don't sleep?)

By getting up you keep your wakeful time associated with a different environment and you get out of the habit of lying in bed and getting frustrated.

If you are not sleeping, you are not sleeping. Get up and do something relaxing.

If you follow this rule you should no longer lie in bed, even if you wake up and struggle to get back to sleep.

Only when you feel sleepy again, do you return to bed. The idea of this is to build a strong association between bed and sleep, and eventually you'll be able to fall asleep soon after getting into bed and not dread bedtime.

Make sure you get up at the same time each day and don't catch up on sleep in the daytime.

These techniques have been proven to help many people but take time and hard work. Good luck and sleep well.

Summary:

There are a few simple rules, which can help improve your sleep. These include:

- **Do** have a bedtime routine and wind down before bedtime, going to sleep and getting up at a regular time
- **Do** get up if you are worrying, or are not asleep after 30 minutes, and do something relaxing
- **Do** exercise regularly, but not late in the evening
- **Do** make sure your bed and bedroom are comfortable
- **Do** check whether any medicines you are taking may be affecting your sleep
- **Don't** worry about not getting enough sleep or lie in bed worrying about other problems
- **Don't** use your bed for things other than sleep
- **Don't** eat or drink caffeine close to bedtime, and cut down during the day.

Useful Contacts -

Open Minds -

Provides short term therapy for those with anxiety and depression.

Grimsby branch
7-9 Osborne Street
Grimsby
DN31 1EY
Tel: 01472 625100

Cleethorpes branch
13-15 Grimsby Road
Cleethorpes
DN35 7AQ
Tel: 01472 252760

E-mail: NAV.Openminds@nhs.net

Single Point of Access -

The acute crisis home treatment service provides an open referral system where people can self-refer via the Single Point of Access.

This service can be contacted **24 hours a day, seven days a week.**

The acute crisis home treatment service is based at:

Harrison House
Peaks Lane
Grimsby, DN32 9RP
Tel: 01472 256256
(Option 3 for mental health)



Rethink -

Provides telephone support service for anyone affected by mental health issues.

Tel: 0808 800 1010

Web: www.rethink.org

Cruse Bereavement Line -

Help for bereaved people and those caring for bereaved people.

Grimsby, Cleethorpes and Louth Branch

Tel: 01472 814455

Mind -

Grimsby, Cleethorpes and District Mind

Tel: 01472 602502

Email: grimsbyandcleethorpesmind@googlemail.com

Web: <http://www.mind.org.uk/>

National Debt Line -

Helping anyone in debt or concerned they may fall into debt.

Tel: 0808 808 4000

Monday - Friday 9 am - 9 pm, Saturday 9:30 am - 1 pm

Visit: http://www.nationaldebtline.co.uk/england_wales



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