

# Sleep...

**Why read this?** Sleep can be difficult. Life can be busy and full of distractions. There can be many reasons for poor sleep. This leaflet is about changing the way you might approach sleep. There is good evidence that these approaches work.

**Sleeping Pills?** Unfortunately sleeping pills can often cause more problems. You can very quickly become reliant on them. They can also give poor, artificial sleep. They can cause issues in the daytime with a hangover effect.

**How much sleep?** Everyone is different. Length of sleep and quality of sleep are important. Most adults need between 6 and 9 hours of sleep every night.

**Am I alone?** No. Sadly sleep issues are very common - but can often be helped with some simple behaviour and habit changes.

**Sleep Hygiene?** This focusses on your environment and habits and can help you start making small changes to get a better sleep.

## Signs of Poor Sleep

Trouble falling asleep, waking up frequently in the night and daytime sleepiness can all come from poor sleep habits. You may also find that only some nights are difficult and others are fine.

## Making Changes

Making any changes in life can be difficult. The information here is only a guide - you may want to adapt it to your own circumstances. Making *gradual adjustments* is important so that you can form long-lasting habits and find out what works for you and what doesn't.

*Keeping a consistent routine is important - make small changes and find what works for you*

*Sleep Hygiene is about good habits and routines around bedtime*

## A Practical Checklist

- ✓ If you can't sleep try moving to another room and doing something different for 30mins.
- ✓ Try to offload any worries / thoughts before bed - sometimes writing a 'to-do' list for the next day can be helpful.
- ✓ Think about your mattress and pillow - could this be better? Do you feel comfortable in bed?
- ✓ Think about your bedding - are you too hot? Too cold? Does it feel comfortable?
- ✓ We have long summer days - is your bedroom dark at night? Would blackout curtains help?
- ✓ Think about the noise levels - if you can't make your room any quieter earplugs can sometimes help or white noise apps.
- ✓ Having a warm bath in the evening can help relax your body ready for sleep.
- ✓ Cultivate healthy daytime habits - exercise, sunlight, sensible eating can all help promote a natural rhythm
- ✗ Try to avoid 'screen-time' at night - it can stimulate your brain and make it more difficult to feel sleepy.
- ✗ Try to avoid any caffeine after early afternoon - it stays in your body for quite a long time!
- ✗ Try to avoid too many daytime naps. Napping can be useful in the daytime but can also interfere with sleep at night.
- ✗ Don't toss and turn - if you can't sleep in bed try moving to another room - in other words try to keep the bedroom for sleeping, not for laying awake.
- ✗ Smoking can disrupt sleep - perhaps it is time to quit? Help is available for this.
- ✗ Alcohol can also disrupt sleep - it wears off and can leave you waking up in the middle of the night

# Keeping a Sleep Diary...

*Sleep problems can be hard to identify and a sleep diary can help*

Below is an example of a sleep diary. Your own one can be different and include things that you find important in your day to day. It may help you identify patterns and make worthwhile changes.

<i>My Sleep Diary</i>	<b>Mon</b>	<b>Tue</b>	<b>Wed</b>	<b>Thu</b>	<b>Fri</b>	<b>Sat</b>	<b>Sun</b>
<i>Time to Bed</i>	10pm						
<i>Time to Sleep</i>	11pm						
<i>No. Times woken</i>	3						
<i>Length of time awake</i>	1hr						
<i>Wake-up time</i>	7am						
<i>Total time in bed</i>	9hr						
<i>Quality of sleep (1-5)</i>	3						

**Reviewing your sleep diary** if you've been keeping a sleep diary you can ask the following questions about your sleep to help you make some changes:

- Am I allowing enough time for sleep
- Is my sleep consistent?
- Am I spending a lot of time awake in bed?
- Is my sleep disrupted? Can I figure out why?
- Do I wake up feeling refreshed and satisfied?
- How drowsy do I feel in the day - is there a pattern?
- Are any daytime naps affecting my sleep?
- Is caffeine / alcohol / medications affecting my sleep?

Once you've been through your diary try to identify things that seem to frequently interrupt your sleep. When you've done this think about how you might be able to address them. You can use the resources on this page to help you with this.

## Further Help

If you are still struggling to sleep after 4 weeks please contact your GP practice for further advice.

## Resources

**Headspace** has some sleep hygiene tips for free on their website at [www.headspace.com/sleep](http://www.headspace.com/sleep) and you can also sign up to stress-busting courses which can often help sleeping health.

**Sleep Foundation** have an entire library available - sleep schedules, routines & practical steps in the bedroom [www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-hygiene](http://www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-hygiene). They can also email you further advice directly and help you keep track of your sleep.

The **NHS** have some good advice on the 'every mind matters' website. This includes a quiz to help you understand your current sleeping habits as well as simple changes you can try.

**Sleepio** is an app which has some free advice and a course that you can sign up for to help monitor your sleep and find what works and what doesn't.

*Try to make small changes at a time - this is easier to maintain*