

PATIENT LEAFLET

Improve your sleep quality by following these simple lifestyle changes

Following these 10 tips from The Sleep Council can help you have a more restful night.

1. Keep regular hours. Going to bed and getting up at roughly the same time every day will programme your body to sleep better. Choose a time when you're most likely to feel sleepy.

2. Create a restful sleeping environment. Your bedroom should be kept for rest and sleep. Keep it as quiet and dark as possible. It should be neither too hot nor too cold. Lighting, temperature and noise should be controlled so that the bedroom environment helps you to fall (and stay) asleep.

3. Make sure that your bed is comfortable. It's difficult to get restful sleep on a mattress that's too soft or too hard, or a bed that's too small or old. If you have a pet that sleeps in the room with you, consider moving it somewhere else if it often makes noise in the night.

4. Exercise regularly. Moderate exercise on a regular basis, such as swimming or walking, can help relieve some of the tension built up over the day. Make sure that you don't do vigorous exercise too close to bedtime, however, as it may keep you awake.

5. Less caffeine. Cut down on stimulants such as caffeine in tea or coffee, especially in the evening. They interfere with the process of falling asleep, and they prevent deep sleep. The effects of caffeine can last a long time (up to 24 hours), so the chances of it affecting sleep are significant. Instead, have a warm, milky drink or herbal tea.

6. Don't over-indulge. Too much food or alcohol, especially late at night, can interrupt your sleep patterns. Alcohol may help you to fall asleep initially, but it will disrupt your sleep later on in the night.

7. Don't smoke. It's bad for sleep. Smokers take longer to fall asleep, they wake up more frequently, and they often have more disrupted sleep.

8. Try to relax before going to bed. Have a warm bath, listen to quiet music or do some gentle yoga to relax the mind and body. Try a relaxation CD.

9. Write away your worries. Deal with worries or a heavy workload by making lists of things to be tackled the next day. If you tend to lie in bed thinking about tomorrow's tasks, set aside time before bedtime to review the day and make plans for the next day. The goal is to avoid doing these things when you're in bed, trying to sleep.

10. Don't worry in bed. If you can't sleep, don't lie there worrying about it. Get up and do something you find relaxing until you feel sleepy again, then return to bed.