

Tips for Good Sleep

Regular sleeping and waking times

- The body and brain work to a rhythm – establishing regular sleep patterns is important
- Going to bed at the same time each night makes falling asleep easier, and ensures a better quality of sleep
- Waking at the same time each day continues the pattern and helps the body to feel rested and refreshed
- Waking at the same time each day is a good starting point for establishing a sleep routine

- If complete darkness causes anxiety, a dim night light may be helpful
- Bedrooms should be assessed for light ‘leak’ sources such as doors, windows and gaps in curtains
- Light sources such as televisions, computers and digital clocks can reduce sleep quality and should be avoided where possible

A consistent and calm routine

- Falling asleep is very difficult if the body is ‘revved up’
- Outdoor activity after work or study can help to calm the body’s systems
- Physical exercise that raises the body’s temperature close to bedtime should be avoided
- Dinner should be eaten at the same time each evening
- A warm shower or bath can be calming – the drop in body temperature afterward can help to encourage sleep
- Computers, television and other screen devices should be turned off one hour before sleep

Sleeping in bed

- Falling asleep in bed is important – waking and transferring to bed after falling asleep in a chair or elsewhere can disrupt sleep and make falling back to a deep sleep very difficult
- Moving to bed when tired and ready to sleep is recommended
- A therapy team or the Sleep Solutions team can provide support and resources to assist with falling asleep, maintaining a deep sleep, and insomnia

A dark bedroom

- Deep sleep is most easily achieved in a dark room – light indicates to the body that it should wake up

Comfort

- Mattresses and pillows should be checked regularly for lumpiness, sagging or being too hard
- Temperature is important – bedrooms should not be too hot or too cold
- Everybody has different bed cover preferences – generally, breathable fabrics that can be layered if needed are recommended
- Many people experience pain or discomfort when lying or sleeping – a therapy team can assist with positioning revisions and supportive equipment if required
- Sleep Solutions offers a range of equipment available to borrow

Tips for Good Sleep cont.

Eating and drinking

- A balanced diet helps the body to achieve deep, restful sleep
- Reducing daily caffeine intake (from coffee, tea, chocolate and soft drinks) can assist with sleep quality – caffeine should be avoided altogether in the hours before sleeping and replaced with milk or water
- Artificial food additives (in many snack foods, processed foods and fast food) affect mood, behaviour, attention, learning and sleep – where possible, they should be avoided
- A dietician can assist with more detailed food and drink recommendations

Enjoying the morning sun

- Exposure to morning sunlight is an important aspect of a good sleep routine – it helps set the 'body clock'
- Blinds should be opened to allow sunshine into a bedroom each morning
- Sitting by a sunny window or enjoying breakfast outdoors are pleasant ways to enjoy the morning sun
- Walking or riding a bike to work or school are great ways to enjoy the morning sun and add some physical exercise to a morning routine

Physical activity

- Physical activity assists with good sleep quality – sleep will be deeper, more consistent and more restful following activities such as swimming, cycling, running or enjoying a long walk
- A therapy team can provide ideas and resources for suitable physical activity

Sensory needs

- Sensory reactions and preferences differ from person to person – managing sensory experiences throughout the day and calming sensations at bedtime will assist with better sleep
- An occupational therapist and the Sleep Solutions team can provide advice about equipment and methods to manage sensory experiences

General mood and communication

- Problems with communication or stress management can be mistaken for a sleep condition – feeling frustrated, angry or upset can impact sleep
- Is frustration present? Can an individual adequately express their needs? If no, is this causing anger, frustration or distress?
- A therapy team can assist with techniques to manage stress, anxiety and general well-being

General health

- Health conditions such as constipation, ear infections, eczema, hay fever, asthma and epilepsy can affect sleep
- Some medications, including timing and quantity, can affect sleep and these impacts should be discussed with a GP
- Conditions that prevent falling asleep or maintain a restful sleep (such as snoring or restless legs syndrome) should be discussed with a GP

Bedroom location

- Where a bedroom lies in relation to other bedrooms or living areas can have a big impact on falling asleep and maintaining deep, restful sleep
- Bedrooms isolated from other parts of a home can be problematic, causing anxiety
- Very quiet, still houses can make falling asleep difficult, as can noise from voices and the television.
- Falling asleep to certain noises that aren't there when waking later in the night can make it hard to settle back to sleep

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