

# SLEEP HYGIENE

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A good night's sleep refuels, revitalises and re-energises you, making you feel refreshed, positive and equipped to cope with the stresses of a normal day.

However, most people experience sleeping problems at some point in their life. It tends to be more common in women and more likely to occur with age. This fact sheet will make some suggestions on how you might improve the quality of your sleep – sometimes referred to as sleep hygiene. There is much evidence to suggest that improving your sleep hygiene can have many positive consequences – so even if you do not think you have a problem sleeping, you can benefit from getting better quality sleep.

There are a number of things you can do to help you get to sleep and improve your sleep hygiene such as:

- avoiding caffeine later in the day – post 4pm
- avoiding heavy meals late at night – post 8pm
- setting regular times to wake up and sticking to a morning and bedtime routine
- using thick curtains or blackout blinds, an eye mask and earplugs to stop you being woken up by light and noise
- only go to bed when you are tired. If you can't sleep, don't lie awake worrying – get up – go back to bed when you are tired
- if worries are keeping you awake – write them down and make a plan to address them the next day
- don't work, eat or watch TV (laptops / tablets / smartphones) in bed – keep bed for sleep and sex
- try and increase your level of day time exercise (don't exercise at night as it can be detrimental to sleep), keep hydrated during the day and try to make healthy food choices.

Try and develop a night time routine which includes relaxation such as, taking a warm bath an hour before you go to bed or listening to calming music. By speaking to your Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) or a healthcare professional, you can design a sleep plan to suit your individual circumstances including analysis of your own sleep diary.

As part of improving your sleep hygiene, you should keep a sleep diary for a minimum of two weeks, and record information such as:

- the time you go to bed
- the time it takes to get to sleep
- the number of times you wake up during the night and at what time
- number of daytime naps
- times of meals, alcohol consumption, exercise and stress
- how awake and functional you feel the next day
- rating each component, will allow you to monitor your sleep and notice the helpful and unhelpful activities.

You should contact your EAP or healthcare professional if a lack of sleep is affecting your daily life and you feel that it's causing a problem.