

Sleep Hygiene

What is sleep hygiene?

Sleep hygiene refers to healthy sleep habits, which are crucial to ensure a good night's sleep. These behaviours, both during the day and prior to bed can affect how well you sleep.

This leaflet contains advice on what you can do to ensure a good night's sleep.

Remember, everyone is different, so figuring out what works best for you may take some trial and error. Try several of the tips included in this booklet to help yourself get better sleep.

Why is good sleep hygiene so important?

Sleep is essential for your physical and mental wellbeing. Without enough quality sleep, our brains are unable to function properly.

Good sleep hygiene can help improve your sleep quality, which in turn can:

- increase your energy levels
- improve your mood, concentration and memory
- prevent you from developing sleep disorders (such as insomnia)
- help you maintain a healthy weight
- lower your risk of developing serious health conditions (such as diabetes and heart disease)
- help your body fight off diseases

Signs of poor sleep hygiene can include difficulty falling asleep, waking up several times during the night and feeling tired during the day.

What are the signs of poor sleep hygiene?

If you have poor sleep hygiene, you may:

- find it difficult to fall asleep
- wake up several times during the night
- feel tired during the day



How can I improve sleep hygiene?

Some simple lifestyle changes to help you get the best possible night's sleep:

- 1. Go to bed and get up at the same time every day:** Keeping regular waking hours, including on a weekend, helps to “set” your body clock. This trains your body to be resting in the evening and alert during the day.
- 2. Reduce or avoid sleeping during the day:** Staying awake during the day will make you more likely to fall asleep at night. Naps longer than 30 minutes late in the afternoon or in the evening will likely affect the quality of your night-time sleep.
- 3. Exercise regularly during the day:** Exercising during the day can help promote a good night's sleep. However, high intensity exercise should be avoided within 3 hours of going to bed as this can delay your sleep. Instead, try relaxing exercise, such as yoga, before bed.
- 4. Limit or avoid caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine before bedtime:** Caffeine stays in your body for up to six hours, so should be avoided after 2pm. This includes coffee, tea, energy drinks and chocolate.

Nicotine is a stimulant that can make it harder to fall asleep and cause you to wake up at night. Avoid smoking before bed. Although alcohol may help with falling asleep, but can disturb your sleep later.
- 5. Eat a light meal 2-3 hours before bed:** Going to bed too full can force your digestive system to keep working when it should be resting. But going to bed hungry can also wake you up during the night.
- 6. Only use the bed for sleeping and sex:** Avoid television, radio, or reading in bed. This will help you associate bed with sleeping.
- 7. Try to have a relaxing bedtime routine:** When you are stressed or anxious, your body produces more cortisol (the stress hormone). Give yourself time to relax before going to bed such as meditating, a warm bath 1–2 hours before, or a milky drink to help you unwind.
- 8. Keep a comfortable sleeping environment:** A cool, dark, and quiet room with a comfortable mattress can help you sleep better and stay asleep. Try using blackout curtains and earplugs.
- 9. Don't force yourself to try to go to sleep:** This will help you feel more awake. Hide any clocks from your view. If you cannot sleep after 30 minutes, get up and go to a quiet room. Do something relaxing without bright lights and go back to bed when you feel sleepy.
- 10. Get regular exposure to natural light:** Morning and early afternoon sunlight helps keep your sleep cycle healthy, while too much evening light can make it harder to fall asleep.
- 11. Avoid electronic devices before going to bed:** Computers, smartphones and televisions can all stimulate your brain for several hours after use, making falling asleep difficult. Use the ‘night filter’ if needed.