

Difficulty Sleeping?

A good nights sleep is achievable

Sleep

A good sleep is essential for your health and happiness. Sleep gives your body the time it needs to do maintenance, to take care of your heart and build a strong immune system to fight infections. A lack of adequate sleep in your life can have a major impact on your ability to function well, handle the pressures of life, and get along with other people.

Symptoms of poor sleep

- Irritability, short temper
- Inability to concentrate
- Poor coping ability
- Low energy
- Tiredness during the day
- Poor decision-making
- Decreased productivity
- Overwhelmed by small challenges

Reasons for poor sleep

There are many reasons why you may not be getting the sleep you feel you need, whether you are having trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or waking up too early. The most common reasons are related to stress, medical problems, hormonal changes or medication, an environment that makes sleep difficult, or various lifestyle factors.

Top tips

- **Regular sleep**
Go to sleep and wake up at around the same time every day
- **Undisturbed sleep**
Avoid sharing a bed with pets, and encourage good sleep habits of a partner
- **Good pre-sleep habits**
Relax for at least an hour before sleep and avoid drinking liquids
- **Effective sleep environment**
Dark, quiet, cool and comfortable
- **Falling asleep**
Practice relaxation techniques
- **Amount of sleep**
Approximately 7 to 9 hours

Further help

If you have tried many of these ideas and are still having problems with sleep after a week or two, see your doctor, who will be able to check if your medications are affecting you, and what other help may be available.

More on managing sleep

Regular sleep patterns

Your body functions best when your daily sleep pattern stays about the same every day; by going to bed and getting up at around the same time. Sleeping in later is likely to disturb your routine and may cause you to be more tired on Monday. If you have been short on sleep for a few days, one good night's sleep will help.

Undisturbed sleep

Many factors can disturb your sleep.

- The movements of another person in your bed may be affecting you, as will pets adjusting their positions frequently.
- Perhaps your snoring is waking you up. There are many possible causes of snoring, such as smoking or being overweight, which can narrow your airways, or alcohol or sedatives in the evening that may relax your throat muscles.
- If you often use the bathroom through the night, try to avoid drinking liquids two hours before bed, and eat earlier in the evening.

Good pre-sleep habits

It is best to relax for at least an hour before going to bed. This means not being too stimulated physically or mentally, by avoiding exercise, alcohol and caffeine, arguments or decision-making. Relaxing activities might be listening to music, reading, or enjoying quiet hobbies like jigsaws.

Effective sleep environment

Most people sleep better in a dark, quiet, cool and comfortable environment. Light is a signal to the brain that it is time to wake up, so make sure to cover windows and keep lights off. You could try using eye-covers and earplugs. A hot bed or room may keep you awake too, so avoid more bedding than is necessary. And of course comfortable mattresses and pillows can make a real difference.

Getting to sleep

It is quite normal to occasionally have difficulty getting to sleep, particularly if something is on your mind. If you cannot fall asleep immediately, don't worry about it, just take time to relax. Practice a meditative technique such as paying attention to your breathing: Follow your breath in and out, and notice your chest rise and fall. Or imagine something that you find beautiful, like a flower, or a beach scene. Sense the details, how it looks, feels, smells, tastes and sounds. If you have a worry or stress that makes it difficult to sleep, try to set it aside to work on during the day, and get the help and support you may need.

