



Tips for improving your sleep

World Sleep Day

This year World Sleep Day is on Friday 18 March and is an annual celebration of sleep and a call to action to raise important issues related to sleep.

You can get involved in the campaign [here](#) by exploring all the activities that will be happening on or around the big day - or even organise one yourself!

If you have problems sleeping then you're not alone... Around a third of adults in the UK find it hard to drop off, have interrupted nights or wake up feeling tired - and this situation has only worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sleep and your health

Getting enough good quality sleep is associated with a host of health and wellbeing benefits, including;

- higher energy and concentration levels
- greater feelings of wellbeing
- improved memory
- stronger immunity
- higher sex drive and fertility
- reduced risk of ill-health

Sleep basics

The amount of sleep we need varies between individuals, but as a rule of thumb

experts recommend 7-8 hours each night.

So what's the secret? Here are eight tried and tested principles of getting a good night of restorative slumber...

Caffeine - minimise or avoid caffeinated drinks from mid-afternoon onwards. Caffeine takes a long time to clear out of your system so the effects of an evening coffee can easily last into bed-time.

• **Exercise** - physical activity during the day will relieve tension and help you feel relaxed. Avoid vigorous exercise close to bedtime though as this can kick up adrenaline levels.

• **Food and drink** - avoid heavy meals or too much alcohol in the evening. You may feel they help you to nod off but the quality of your sleep will be affected.

• **Bedtime routine** - wind down in the evenings with a hot bath, some soft music or even some easy yoga, meditation or aromatherapy to prepare your mind and body for sleep.

• **Timing** - as far as you can, try to go to sleep and wake up at more or less the same times each day. Keeping this as regular as possible helps to keep you in tune with your natural sleep cycle.

• **Once you're in bed** - try to avoid looking at any type of screen whether it be a phone, a laptop or a TV so you don't re-stimulate your mind. Some light reading or gentle relaxation techniques are ideal ways to move into sleep.

• **Don't force it** - If you wake up and find it hard to get back to sleep then lying in the dark worrying about it is unlikely to help. It's better to get up, make a cup of herbal tea or a milky drink and read a book until you feel sleepy again.

When to see your GP

Over time a lack of sleep can affect every area of your life including work and relationships - often causing some degree of depression or anxiety.

If you get to this stage, you may want to have a chat with your doctor - they may recommend cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) or counselling - or they may possibly prescribe short-term medication to help you to establish healthy sleeping patterns.

For further advice on sleep hygiene visit the NHS website [here](#).