



Sleep Hygiene

Sleep plays an important role in maintaining good mental health. There are many reasons that people might struggle with sleep, which can include daily habits, to more significant life factors such as stress or burnout. Despite this, there are some easy sleep hygiene tips that can help you get a good night's sleep, contributing to your physical and mental health.

Things to avoid



- Caffeine (don't forget this is not only found in coffee; it is also present in cola and stimulation drinks, tea, drinking chocolate – read the labels)
- Alcohol (especially don't use it in the belief it will help with sleep; although it makes you drowsy, it does not improve sleep, but you will wake up more frequently to go to the toilet)
- Smoking just before bed (nicotine is a stimulant)
- Exercising just before bed
- Engaging in stimulating activity just before bed (for example, watching an exciting movie, playing computer games)
- Watching TV or listening to energetic music in bed (this is stimulating and does not allow your brain to slow down to adequate sleep states)
- Going to bed too hungry, or too full
- Commanding yourself to go to sleep (it keeps your mind in a state of activity)
- Taking daytime naps, or sleeping very late in the morning
- Having a clock that you can see from your bed (it doesn't matter what the time is, but knowing the time can change your attitude towards trying to get to sleep).

Thing you should aim to do

- Go to bed at the same time every day
- Get up at the same time every day
- Exercise every day; at least 30 minutes of intense exercise, or an hour of gentle exercise improves restful sleep
- Expose yourself to outdoor natural light every day
- For an hour before going to bed, do something relaxing and gentle
- Keep the bedroom reasonably dark
- Keep the bedroom quiet
- Make sure the temperature of your bedroom is comfortable
- If you get very cold hands or feet, wear socks or mittens
- Use a 'getting to sleep' technique, like Paradoxical Intention
- If you are awake in bed for more than 30 minutes, get up and go to a different part of the bedroom or house for 20 minutes and engage in a non-stimulating activity, then return to bed. Do this as often as you need to.



Paradoxical Intention

This is a simple self-help approach that some people have found helpful in tackling trouble in falling asleep, although it does take practice.

'Good sleepers' don't think about falling asleep, they just do it. 'Bad sleepers' often overthink falling asleep or can feel anxious about it; this over focus on sleep often actually keeps them awake.

With paradoxical intention, we simply focus on staying awake, but relaxed, rather than forcing ourselves to try to sleep.

- When you are in bed, lie in a comfortable position and put turn the lights off
- Keep your eyes open and try to keep them open 'just for a little while longer'
- As time goes by, congratulate yourself on staying awake but relaxed
- Remind yourself not to try to sleep but to let sleep overtake you, as you gently try to resist it
- Keep this mind-set going as long as you can
- If you are worried about staying awake, remind yourself that is the idea, so you are succeeding
- Don't actively prevent sleep by trying to rouse yourself
- Be like the good sleeper; let sleep come to you.



Who we are

We're Mental Health UK, and we challenge the causes of poor mental health and provide people with the tools they need to live their best possible lives at home, school and work.

Find out more about the relationship between sleep and mental health:
mentalhealth-uk.org/sleep