



## Sleep hygiene

**A good night's sleep is something most of us can appreciate. We probably take this for granted when it happens but soon recognise when it is missing. Poor sleep or insomnia can affect our mood and outlook, disrupt our ability to function in our day-to-day life and in the longer term, it can have an adverse effect on our physical and emotional health and well-being.**

### Tips for a better night's sleep

- If you are having trouble sleeping, there are some simple things that you can do to improve your chances of a good night's sleep.

#### Limit alcohol consumption

- Excessive amounts of alcohol disturb your natural sleep patterns and can cause night time awakening. You may actually sleep longer, but you will wake up with a headache or feeling sluggish
- Limit your drinking to one or two nights a week
- Avoid alcohol for at least four hours before going to bed.

#### Avoid caffeine before bedtime

- Caffeine is found in tea and coffee, as well as chocolate, cola drinks and some so called health and energy drinks

- Do not consume drinks containing caffeine for at least four hours before going to bed
- If you cannot resist an after-dinner coffee, opt for a decaffeinated coffee, or better still, non-caffeinated herbal tea such as camomile or rosehip.

#### Avoid sugar before bedtime

- Sugar can cause a rush of energy shortly after you have ingested it, which is the last thing you want when trying to sleep
- Avoid sugar in any form before bedtime, whether in a malted bedtime drink, fruit squash, biscuits or a sweet dessert after a late meal.

#### Avoid supplements at night

- Several vitamin and mineral supplements also have a slight stimulating effect
- Where possible, take vitamin and mineral supplements in the morning rather than at night.

### **Avoid exercise before bedtime**

- Where possible, engage in physical activity during the day rather than near bedtime.

### **Do not worry about not sleeping**

- Try to avoid spending a long time lying awake in bed worrying about not sleeping
- If you cannot sleep within twenty minutes, get up and go into another dimly lit room
- Try something relaxing, such as reading a magazine or newspaper until you feel sleepy again
- Do not watch television, as the bright light has an alerting rather than relaxing effect
- Try to avoid reading a novel in case your interest is awakened and you find you are reluctant to put it down.

### **Do not smoke before bedtime**

- Do not smoke for at least four hours before going to bed.

## Ten rules for better sleep hygiene

**1.** Sleep as much as needed to feel refreshed and healthy but not more. Limiting your time in bed seems to help the quality of sleep. Excessively long times in bed seem related to fragmented and shallow sleep.

**2.** A regular rising time in the morning strengthens the circadian rhythm and leads to regular times of sleep onset.

**3.** A steady, daily amount of exercise probably deepens sleep. Occasional exercise does not necessarily improve sleep the following night.

**4.** Occasional loud noises disturb sleep even in people who are not awakened by noises and cannot remember them in the morning. Soundproofed bedrooms may help those who sleep close to noise.

**5.** Although excessively warm rooms disturb sleep, there is no evidence that an excessively cold room deepens sleep.

**6.** Hunger may disturb sleep whereas a light snack may help sleep.

**7.** Caffeine in the evening disturbs sleep, even in those who feel it does not.

**8.** Alcohol helps tense people fall asleep more easily, but the ensuing sleep is then fragmented.

**9.** People who feel angry and frustrated because they cannot sleep should not try harder to fall asleep but should turn the light on and do something different.

**10.** The chronic use of tobacco disturbs sleep.

You may find the following websites and phone numbers useful:

#### **The Sleep Council**

The insomnia helpline aims to advise and reassure those who are having trouble sleeping.

Tel: 020 8994 9874

[www.sleepcouncil.com](http://www.sleepcouncil.com)

#### **British Snoring and Sleep Apnoea Association**

Helps snorers and their sleeping partners worldwide.

Tel: 01737 245638

[www.britishsnoring.co.uk](http://www.britishsnoring.co.uk)

email: [info@britishsnoring.co.uk](mailto:info@britishsnoring.co.uk)

#### **National Sleep Foundation**

American website with information on sleep and sleep disorders.

[www.sleepfoundation.org](http://www.sleepfoundation.org)

#### **Narcolepsy Association UK (UKAN)**

Promotes the interests of people with narcolepsy and encourages better understanding of the illness.

Tel: 0845 450 0394

[www.narcolepsy.org.uk](http://www.narcolepsy.org.uk)

email: [info@narcolepsy.org.uk](mailto:info@narcolepsy.org.uk)