

# Sleep hygiene

**This leaflet gives some general advice about sleep hygiene. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.**

Sleep is an essential part of feeling well and feeling happy, but almost everyone experiences problems sleeping at some time in their life. Sleep disruption is common, especially during times when you may feel emotionally overwhelmed. Anxiety, relentless replaying of the day's events, and heightened emotions may significantly interfere with your sleep.

Bringing sleep patterns under control is important – you need your rest. However, it often takes some time to get problematic sleep under control and rarely can this be done overnight. The most common cause of insomnia is a change in your daily routine or stress. For example, travelling, exams, work stress, change in work hours, disruption caused by eating, exercise, or leisure, relationship conflicts, etc, may all cause problems.

Paying attention to good sleep hygiene is the most important thing you can do to maintain good sleep.

## Do

- ✓ Keep a regular sleep routine – wake up at the same time each day, weekends included.
- ✓ Get regular exercise each day, preferably in the morning (there is good evidence regular exercise improves restful sleep).
- ✓ Get regular exposure to outdoor or bright lights, especially in the early afternoon.
- ✓ Keep the temperature in your bedroom comfortable.
- ✓ Keep the bedroom dark enough to facilitate sleep.
- ✓ Keep the bedroom quiet – try thicker curtains, sleeping at the back of your house or even earplugs to avoid being woken by noise.
- ✓ Only use your bedroom for sleep, sex, and getting dressed.

- ✓ Give yourself 1-1.5 hours to wind down before going to sleep. Use this time to process the day's events, write a to-do list for the next day or do something relaxing.
- ✓ Try muscle relaxation to help distress and unwind, eg a warm bath, massage or progressive muscular relaxation (PMR).
- ✓ If you lie in bed awake for more than 20-30 minutes, get up, go to a different room (or different part of the bedroom), participate in a quiet activity (eg non-excitable reading or television), then return to bed when you feel sleepy. Do this as many times during the night as needed.

## Don't

- ✗ Exercise just before going to bed.
- ✗ Engage in stimulating activity just before bed, such as playing computer games, watching an exciting movie or program on television, or having an important discussion with a loved one.
- ✗ Have caffeine in the evening (coffee, tea, chocolate, etc).
- ✗ Have alcohol in the evening or use alcohol to sleep (it may make you drowsy but it doesn't improve sleep and you may wake to go to the toilet).
- ✗ Smoke before going to bed – nicotine is a stimulant and will keep you awake.
- ✗ Read or watch television in bed.
- ✗ Go to bed too hungry or too full.
- ✗ Take another person's sleeping pills.
- ✗ Never take daytime naps or doze off in front of the TV in the evening – keep yourself awake with something stimulating or you risk resetting your body clock.
- ✗ Try and make yourself go to sleep if you are not feeling sleepy. This only makes your mind and body more alert.

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about any of the information in this leaflet, please contact the sleep disorders centre at Guy's, **t:** 020 7188 3430, or St Thomas', **t:** 020 7188 8832.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **w:** [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets)

## Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

**t:** 020 7188 8801 (PALS)      **e:** [complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk)

**t:** 020 7188 3514 (complaints)      **e:** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

## Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch.

**t:** 020 7188 8815      **e:** [languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk)

## NHS website

Online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing.

**w:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

This leaflet uses information originally produced by the University Health Service at the University of Southampton, adapted with their kind permission.

**Leaflet number: 4704/VER1**

Date published: March 2019

Review date: March 2022

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NHS Foundation Trust

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