

Sleep matters

Sleep is essential to our health and is a vital part of our daily life. It is important for both our physical and mental health. We spend approximately a third of our lives asleep, helping our bodies to function at their best. Practical advice and information on how to improve your sleep is available.

Sleeping well

Anxiety and worry can make it harder to get a good night's sleep. Good-quality sleep improves our physical and mental wellbeing. For practical advice on how to improve your sleep, visit [Every Mind Matters sleep](#)

Tips for better sleep are available at [Carers UK help and advice](#)

COVID-19 and Sleep

A good sleep routine and sleep habits (referred to as **sleep hygiene**) are the basis for quality sleep. The stronger your sleep routine and sleep hygiene are, the more able you are likely to be to maintain sleep under stress. As pressure increases, it's important to have helpful strategies in place.

Fatigue

We have an internal body clock (natural circadian rhythm) that tells us when to sleep. As more of us are experiencing longer working patterns and sleep deprivation, there is potential to encounter increasing levels of fatigue. Finding ways to manage fatigue as a result of changing roles and/or work patterns is really important.

Sleep Hygiene

Sleep hygiene refers to a variety of different practices and habits that are necessary to have good sleep quality and daytime alertness. Obtaining healthy sleep improves our productivity and overall quality of life. Signs of poor sleep hygiene include frequent sleep disturbances, finding falling asleep difficult and daytime sleepiness.

Tips for improving sleep hygiene

Limit daytime naps to 30 minutes

Napping isn't an alternative to night-time sleep. For some a short nap, if you can manage it, can help to improve mood, alertness and performance.

Avoid stimulants such as caffeine, nicotine and alcohol close to bedtime

Try to limit or if possible avoid consuming stimulants up to 2 hours before bedtime. Whilst some people believe alcohol helps them fall asleep faster, too much alcohol close to bed-time can disrupt sleep as the body begins to process the alcohol.

Physical activity

As little as 10 minutes aerobic exercise, such as walking, can improve sleep quality. Avoid strenuous workouts close to bedtime if you can, the effect on sleep differs from person to person, so find out what works for you.

Avoid disruptive foods before sleep

Heavy or rich foods, fatty, fried or spicy meals and carbonated drinks can promote indigestion in some people. If eaten close to bedtime, this can lead to painful and sleep-disrupting heartburn.

Adequate exposure to natural light

When you are able to, try to take your breaks outside in natural light. Exposure to daytime sunlight and darkness at night helps to maintain a healthy sleep-wake cycle.

Establish regular relaxing bedtime routine

When you are able to, a regular routine helps the body to recognise that it is bedtime. This can include a warm bath or shower, reading for pleasure or light exercises or stretches through pilates or yoga. Try relaxation, mindfulness or meditation to calm your mind before bedtime.

Sleep environment

If you can, try to create a pleasant sleeping environment. Mattress and pillows should be comfortable and the bedroom should be cool for optimal sleep. Bright light from lamps, mobile phones and TV screens will have a disruptive effect on sleep so if you are able to, adjust lighting and avoid screen watching for a couple of hours before bedtime. Consider using black out blinds/curtains to darken the room. Waking up during your normal sleep routine can be helped by relaxation and mindfulness techniques.