

WELLBEING GUIDE to good sleep



Sleep

Why is sleep important?

Sleep is essential for overall health and wellbeing. It is just as important as eating well and maintaining physical fitness. Sleep helps to restore us. You wake up feeling refreshed and focused, ready for the day ahead.

This means that it is important to prioritise sleep, as it can help increase performance, agility, concentration, stamina, happiness and good mental and physical health.

When you haven't had enough sleep, your body hasn't had the chance to repair and restore energy. You have probably noticed that when your sleep is interrupted, you feel unfocused and tired the next day. Your brain will not function as effectively, you may have slower reaction times, and your ability to concentrate is reduced.

Poor sleep can also increase irritability, potentially impacting your communication with others, affect your relationships, and your ability to concentrate on your studies.

Some of the things that can hinder sleep

- ✘ Using technology an hour before bedtime.
 - ✘ Lots of bright or artificial lights an hour before bedtime.
 - ✘ Caffeinated drinks. Did you know there is 34 mg of caffeine in a can of coke, almost as much as a cup of coffee (40mg)?
 - ✘ Keeping all your worries bottled up inside and not letting anyone support you.
 - ✘ Eating late, especially 2–3 hours before sleep, your body will be digesting food when it is supposed to be resting fully even if you do fall asleep.
 - ✘ Worrying about not sleeping will exacerbate the negative impact so it is better to calm the mind by counting or visualising calming scenes than worry about the clock. Better still, do the Brain Dump exercise. (see bottom right).
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Managing your mindset

When you do not sleep well, you may worry that you are not sleeping.

Keeping a sleep diary, where you track hours slept alongside things you have done that helped and did not help can be useful here. Use a smart phone to access functionalities or apps that will help you keep track of the hours you've slept.

**Rather than focusing on the little sleep you have had,
it is better to focus on the time that you did sleep.**

Tips to help you sleep better

- ✔ Set a specific time to sleep each night to give yourself the time you need to fall asleep and stay asleep.
- ✔ Maintain a healthy lifestyle including a balanced diet, and getting fresh air and consistent exercise that you enjoy.
- ✔ Try relaxing, calming and soothing activities such as reading a book, listening to music or having a warm shower or bath, at least an hour before sleep. Dim or mood lighting and using soaps with relaxing scents may help.
- ✔ Block out as much light as possible. Create the darkest room you can, consider using an eye mask if it is hard to block out the light.
- ✔ Turn off all electronics completely and keep phones/devices away from where you sleep.
- ✔ Write down everything that is bothering you or talk to a trusted person in your life so that you feel supported

The Brain Dump exercise – Did you know if you wake up and can't get back to sleep and do the Brain Dump exercise it is almost guaranteed to send you back to sleep? All you need for the brain dump exercise is a notepad. Write three full pages of anything and everything in your brain, even if you run out of things to say, you can write that down.

What are you going to try to get a better night's sleep?

A large, empty white rounded rectangle with rounded corners, occupying most of the page below the question. It is intended for the user to write their response to the question above.

Further help and support

- **Consistently struggling with sleep issues and nothing is helping?**
 - See your GP or consider registering at the University Medical Practice: readinguniversitymedicalpractice.nhs.uk
- **Blog post**
 - blogs.reading.ac.uk/life-tools-programme/2020/06/03/getting-a-good-nights-sleep
- **NHS guidance**
 - nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness
- **Reach out to the Counselling and Wellbeing Service and/or Student Welfare team for additional support.**
 - reading.ac.uk/essentials/support-services