

Tips for a good night's sleep:

- Ensure you get outside and get light on your body each day, ideally take a walk or other exercise outside every day in the morning when there is the most light.
- Reduce levels of light in the evening so you help shift your body into melatonin production and ready for sleep. Too much light in the evening can confuse your body clock and make it more difficult to sleep.
- Finish eating at least 3 hours before bedtime, so your digestive system is not working overtime whilst you are trying to sleep.
- Avoid caffeine or sweet, sugary foods in your last meal of the day, depending on how you metabolise caffeine, you may need to stop it in the middle of the day as it stimulates your system and can make it more difficult to fall asleep.
- Whilst one glass of wine - ideally red - may relax you in the evening, excessive alcohol is known to disrupt sleep cycles and sleep quality later in the night.
- Have a regular routine for 30 – 60 mins before going to bed, this should include relaxing activities and be part of your 'wind down' process or sleep ritual, preparing your body and brain for sleep.
- Finish working on your computer, laptop, tablet or watching TV at least 1 hour before bed. The blue light emitted from these devices has been shown in many studies to disrupt melatonin production. Keep these devices in another room, not in your bedroom.
- Aim to go to bed and wake up in the morning at roughly the same time each day including weekends if possible, this keeps your circadian rhythms stable and therefore makes it easier for your brain and body to automatically get into pre sleep mode.
- Avoid lie ins at the weekend – as this starts to change your body clock and can make it difficult to feel sleepy enough on a Sunday night to get enough rest before the week starts again.
- Keep your bedroom as dark as possible and also cool, you are more likely to fall asleep easily if your room is not too warm. Use earplugs or white noise if snoring or environmental noise is an issue.
- Aim for your bedroom's purpose to be for sleep, quiet reading, relaxation, meditation and sex only.
- If you wake up in the middle of the night, avoid turning on bright lights as this is likely to wake up your body, thinking its daytime. Use a max 20W night

light if you do need to get up. Try deep breathing exercises and try not to get caught up in thoughts as this can make you become more awake.

- If you are exhausted in the day, take a short nap of 30 minutes in the early afternoon, this strategy seems to work better than having a lie in as it does not throw off your sleep-wake rhythm so much. But set your alarm, so you don't sleep longer. If you can't fall asleep easily that night, even with a short nap, eliminate the nap altogether.
- Ensure your mattress is supportive and comfortable. Pillows too, can have an effect on your quality of sleep – find one that works for your sleep position and feels comfortable and supportive for your head and neck.
- It has been shown that adults are more productive and focused on tasks if you take the time to be quiet for short periods of every day. Build some quiet time in to your schedule every day, even if only for 15 minutes. Take some deep breaths, look around you and feel in the present moment. Meditation and mindfulness will quiet your mind and allow your body to be more calm, positively affect your sleep when practiced regularly. Yoga is great too.
- Calm and gentle music helps. Low frequency sounds, lower tempo and few beats per minute, ideally instrumental, no lyrics. This helps us to relax calm and quiet the mind. Use this music only as preparation for sleep so it becomes a ritual and your brain associates it with sleep.
- Travelling through time zones and the subsequent jet lag is known to disrupt sleep for a period of time, sticking to a good bedtime routine and moving yourself gradually into the destination timings along with avoiding lie ins and too much alcohol or eating close to bedtime will help the transition to run more smoothly.
- Avoid prescription medications, these actually interrupt sleep rhythms over a period of time making it even more difficult to get good sleep after you have been taking them for a while. Many are also addictive.

Note: as with changing any habits, you need to keep to the new routine and to repeat good sleep practice every night for a good length of time before you will notice significant improvements. Trying for one or two nights and then giving up will not help!

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