

Sleep Support Guide

We can all suffer from issues around sleep from time to time, but prolonged periods of not getting enough quality sleep can have a detrimental effect on our ability to function daily. This can lead to a decline in our physical and mental health too.

National Sleep Foundation Tips

Healthy sleep habits can make a big difference in your quality of life. Having healthy sleep habits is often referred to as having good sleep hygiene.

They say it is best to try and keep to the following sleep practices on a consistent basis:

1. Stick to a sleep schedule of the same bedtime and wake up time, even on weekends. This helps to regulate your body's clock and could help you fall asleep easier and stay asleep for the night.
2. Practice a relaxing bedtime ritual. A relaxing, routine activity right before bedtime, conducted away from bright lights helps separate your sleep time from activities that can cause excitement, stress or anxiety in the brain. This in turn, can make it more difficult to fall asleep, get sound and deep sleep or remain asleep.
3. If you have trouble sleeping, avoid naps, especially in the afternoon. Power napping may help you get through the day, but if you find that you cannot fall asleep at bedtime, eliminating even short catnaps may help.
4. Exercise daily. Vigorous exercise is best, but even light exercise is better than no activity. Exercise at any time of day, but not at the expense of your sleep.
5. Evaluate your room. Design your sleep environment to establish the conditions you need for sleep. Your bedroom should be cool, roughly between 60 and 67 degrees. Your bedroom should also be free from any noise that can disturb your sleep. Finally, your bedroom should be free from any light. Check your room for noises or other distractions. This includes a bed partner's sleep disruptions such as snoring. Consider using blackout curtains, eye shades, ear plugs, "white noise" machines, humidifiers, fans and other devices.
6. Sleep on a comfortable mattress and pillows. Make sure your mattress is comfortable and supportive. The one you have been using for years may have exceeded its life expectancy, they say about 9 or 10 years for most good quality mattresses. Have comfortable pillows and make the room attractive and inviting for sleep but also free of allergens that might affect you and objects that might cause you to slip or fall if you have to get up during the night.
7. Use bright light to help manage your circadian rhythms. Avoid bright light in the evening and expose yourself to sunlight in the morning. This will keep your circadian rhythms in check.
8. Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and heavy meals in the evening. Alcohol, cigarettes and caffeine can disrupt sleep. Eating big or spicy meals can cause discomfort such as indigestion that can make it hard to sleep. If you can, avoid eating large meals for two to three hours before bedtime. Try a light snack 45 minutes before bed if you're still hungry.

9. Wind down. Your body needs time to shift into sleep mode, so spend the last hour before bed doing a calming activity such as reading. For some people, using an electronic device such as a laptop can make it hard to fall asleep, because the light emanating from the screens of these devices is activating to the brain. If you have trouble sleeping, avoid electronics before bed or in the middle of the night.
10. If you cannot sleep, go into another room and do something relaxing until you feel tired. It is best to take work materials, computers and televisions out of the sleeping environment. Use your bed only for sleep and sex to strengthen the association between bed and sleep. If you associate a certain activity or an item with anxiety about sleeping, omit it from your bedtime routine.
11. If you are still having trouble sleeping, do not hesitate to speak with your doctor or to find a sleep professional. You may also benefit from recording your sleep in a Sleep Diary to help you keep track and better evaluate common patterns or issues you may see with your sleep or sleeping habits.

NHS Sleep Apps and Support Tools

Sleepio

Sleepio is an online sleep improvement programme for people living in Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire. It has been clinically proven to help you fall asleep faster, stay asleep through the night, and give you more energy during the day, if you follow the programme correctly. The programme is based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Insomnia (CBTi). You can use it to learn cognitive techniques to help tackle the racing mind and behavioural strategies to help reset sleeping patterns naturally, without relying on sleeping pills.

Visit:

https://www.sleepio.com/work/nhs/?utm_source=NHSAppsLibrary#/welcome?k=npx1je

Some further information on Sleepio: <https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/sleepio/>

Sleepstation

Free with a GP referral

Sleepstation is a 6-week online course for people who struggle to fall asleep or stay asleep through the night. The course is tailored to your needs, and using the information you provide, it gives you access to a team of sleep experts who will offer helpful advice and support throughout.

For further information:

Visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/sleepstation/>

Visit: <https://www.sleepstation.org.uk/>

Pzizz

The Pzizz app helps you quickly calm your mind, fall asleep fast, stay asleep, and wake up feeling refreshed. It uses "dreamscapes": A mix of music, voiceovers and sound effects

designed using the latest clinical research to help you sleep better at night or take power naps during the day.

Free, with in-app purchases

For further information:

Visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/pzizz/>

Moodjuice

This provides a self- help guide to understanding your sleep issues and how small changes to your lifestyle and routines can really help improve your quality of sleep. It also explores the physical effects on your body that lack of sleep can have and the knock-on effect to general health.

Visit: <https://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/sleepproblems.asp>

Oxford CBT sleep help

Based in Oxfordshire, Oxford CBT are helping to better understand their sleeping problems and the effects it can have on physical and mental health. They are happy to help anyone with persistent poor sleep or insomnia.

Visit: <https://www.oxfordcbt.co.uk/cbttherapy/insomnia-sleep-difficulties/>

Priory group

Another organisation looking to help people with sleep disorders by providing therapy. The aim is to help people improve their sleep patterns and wake up feeling more refreshed.

At this time, due to COVID 19, face to face sessions are not being offered for the moment. They are offering telephone support, as well as video support via Skype.

Visit: <https://www.priorygroup.com/mental-health/sleep-disorders-treatment>

Sleep Well Oxford

Sleep therapy based on Cognitive-Behavioural Approaches to help people who are struggling to sleep. They offer a caring clinician experience and environment.

Telephone: 07493 492 065

Email: enquiries@sleepwelloxford.com

Visit: <https://www.sleepwelloxford.com/>