

Sleep hygiene advice

Information and advice for patients

Respiratory Physiology

Sleep hygiene helps people understand what can affect their sleep, good or bad. By developing good habits and routines sleep quality can be improved.

Relaxation before bed

- The amount and pattern of sleep change with age, but most adults need between 6 and 9 hours of sleep every night.
- A warm bath before bed helps your body reach a good temperature ideal for rest.
- Make sure you take time to wind down.
- To relax before going to bed try reading a book, having a bath, or listening to soothing music.
- Avoid napping during the day.
- Avoid vigorous exercise within an hour of bedtime, but exercise is beneficial earlier in the day.
- Try writing a to-do-list for the next day. This can help organise your thoughts and clear your mind of distractions.

The sleep environment

- Your bedroom should only be used for sleep and intimacy.
- The ideal temperature should be between 18 and 24 degrees Celsius, dark, quiet and tidy.
- Your bedroom needs to be sleep friendly, free from TV, electronic gadgets, lights and noise. Bright light (including all technology) should be minimized. 'Blue light' displays on electronic devices and televisions suppress melatonin production - avoid using devices for at least an hour before bed.

Regular sleep schedules

- Go to bed when you feel sleepy but avoid going to bed too early.
 - Sleeping at regular times programs the brain and internal body clock to get used to a set routine.
 - You should wake up and get out of bed at the same time every morning including weekends and after a poor night's sleep.
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- Try to get some sunlight in the morning - it naturally helps your body know when to wake up. This helps develop a good sleep-wake cycle.
- Avoid checking the time or watching the clock throughout the night.

Avoidance of caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol

- Don't have caffeine after midday, and avoid smoking, nicotine containing products, drinking alcohol, or eating big meals within two hours before going to bed.
- Drinking alcohol is a common but harmful way to try to treat sleep problems, and it can lead to poor sleep quality.

Long-term sleep problems

Sleep hygiene alone can't cure long-term sleep problems, but it works best when combined with Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I).

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Insomnia (CBT-I)

CBT-I is a proven, effective programme to help people overcome long-term sleep problems. It works by changing unhelpful thoughts and behaviours around sleep helping to establish healthier bedtime routines.

Ask your GP for NHS free of charge CBT-I however, this may not be available in all areas. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recommend an app called Sleepio. There is an initial cost, but users under the new guidelines have 12 months access from registration. The programme lasts 6 weeks however, you can use it at your own pace. Visit: www.sleepio.com for more information.

Further reading

Every Mind Matters

How to fall asleep faster and sleep better

<https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-wellbeing-tips/how-to-fall-asleep-faster-and-sleep-better/>

Every Mind Matters

Simple tips for better sleep

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OvQTjAllvI8>

Mental Health Foundation

How to sleep better

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/publications/how-sleep-better>

(All websites accessed 15 August 2025)

Sources used for the information in this leaflet

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (2025). Clinical Knowledge Summary (CKS): Insomnia: Scenario: managing insomnia [online] Available at: <https://cks.nice.org.uk/topics/insomnia/management/managing-insomnia/#good-sleep-hygiene> (Accessed 15 August 2025).

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