

WHAT IS STOPPING YOU SLEEPING?

It's rare for doctors to give you sleeping tablets these days. But don't leave the surgery just yet...

If you are not sleeping well, you usually know what is behind it and can put it right if you want to Ask at reception for a **Sleep hygiene leaflet**, or download a copy from our website.

To be fair: if you have a big problem with un-refreshing sleep, you have come to the right place. Many people struggle with their sleep because they have an emotional health problem. Most commonly depression, anxiety and hazardous or harmful drinking habits. Although alcohol can get people off to sleep, it causes poor quality sleep, snoring and sometimes sleep apnoea.

Pain or restless legs can also get in the way of a good night's rest. And loads of things that we take by mouth can keep us awake; Caffeine, decongestants, fluoxetine and some antidepressant medications, beta blockers, decongestants, water tablets, steroids and recreational drugs.

If you don't know what the problem is please ask for an **Insomnia questionnaire**. Give the completed form to your doctor and let him or her figure it out with you. You might like to get hold of a very helpful book called *Coping with insomnia*.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy works really well for insomnia. Some of you will be able to get CBT through our Sunderland Psychological Wellbeing service by phoning 566 5454. Others will prefer to do it through your smart phone with a *Sleepio* App or online through www.sleepio.com (it may cost £50 online but there is a free version of the app).

You might be one of the 12% of people who don't sleep efficiently. In which case we sometime suggest you go to bed later. The average 80-year-old only needs 5 ½ hours sleep. A **sleep diary** can be really helpful to figure this one out.

Sleeping tablets cause falls, accidents, dementia, dependency and death. But occasionally we still use them short-term. If you're a shift-worker, suffering with jetlag or sleeping at the wrong time of day then melatonin may be useful to reset your body clock.

If you have restless legs your doctor will probably check your blood count and your iron levels and may give you some medication.

If you tend to fall asleep during the day get someone to watch you for half an hour at night. If you stop breathing at night you may have a problem call sleep apnoea syndrome. Usually this will make you for sleep during the day. Fill in an **Epworth questionnaire** from our website or reception and come and tell us if your sleeping partner says that you stop breathing at night.