

## Information and Guidance on Sleep Hygiene

# Insomnia

is when you...

- can't fall asleep
- wake up too early
- wake up in the night for long periods
- don't feel rested when you wake

Poor sleep can be brought on by all kinds of triggers such as: stress, worry, a change of routine, food and drink, environment, medication, and certain medical conditions.

## How much sleep do I need?

Everyone is different. Some people can function on as little as 3 to 4 hours of sleep. On average though, most of us need 6 to 9 hours a night. However, as we get older, we may need less sleep than we used to.

If you feel sleepy throughout the day, or you find it hard to concentrate on tasks, or find yourself getting more irritable, you may need more sleep.

1 in 3 people aren't getting as much sleep as they would like!



## I should take sleeping tablets, right?

Sleeping tablets are not the best choice. They can cause addiction and make you drowsy in the day. They might even stop working if you take them regularly. Not only that, they may interact with other medicines, even the ones you buy from your pharmacy.

For these reasons, your doctor will only prescribe enough for a week or two and only for times of extreme distress.

If you've been taking sleeping tablets for a long time, it is best to **slowly** cut down the dose after discussing it with your doctor. But the good news is, there are lots of things you can do to improve your sleep.

## Tips and Tricks

- Get up at the same time each day
- Don't nap in the daytime
- Avoid binge-sleeping at weekends
- Exercise in the day
- Don't watch TV, work or study in bed
- Wear eye shades or ear plugs in bed
- Put lavender drops in a humidifier or a bowl of hot water, or direct onto your pillow
- Turn your alarm clock to face away so you aren't tempted to clock-watch!
- Download a sleep app for your smartphone or invest in a sleep monitor bracelet

- Make sure your bedroom is dark and quiet at night
- Check the temperature of your bedroom
- Does your mattress or bed need changing?

## Countdown to Sleep



### 6 hours before bedtime

- No caffeine or stimulants (check with your pharmacist about any medicines you take)
- No alcohol or smoking



### 4 hours before bedtime

- No heavy exercise



### 2 hours before bedtime

- No heavy meals
- Avoid study or mentally demanding tasks
- Take a light stroll followed by a warm bath
- Read a soothing book
- Listen to soft music

## Don't panic

Remember, short periods of waking in the night are normal. If you can't sleep after 20-30 minutes, get up and do something restful. Go back to bed when you feel sleepy. Repeat this until you are asleep.

## Keep a Sleep Diary

- Write down your daily activities
- Include food and drink, medicines taken, your mood, hours slept and how refreshed you feel the next morning
- Include any other factors that might have disturbed your sleep e.g. noise, mood, work shifts, light levels, discomfort etc
- Identify possible links between your lifestyle and sleep patterns
- Note any new habits or behaviours to check whether they're helping or inhibiting your sleep quality

## Monitors and Apps

Electronic health monitors such as *Fitbit* can help you keep track of sleep patterns, as well as measure your heart rate, physical activity and other details.

Smartphone apps can also help you monitor your sleep. For example, *Sleep Cycle* provides a daily graph, monitors your sleep pattern and functions as an alarm clock.

There are also electronic apps to help you fall sleep to music and soothing sounds, as well as guided meditations to ease you into a more restful state.



## Who else can help?

Local community groups may offer courses in mindfulness and relaxation techniques.

If anxieties, worries and stress are making it difficult to sleep, you may find counselling a helpful resource.

You can also search for more advice about insomnia and sleeplessness on websites such as:

- The Sleep Council  
[www.sleepcouncil.org.uk](http://www.sleepcouncil.org.uk)
- Royal College of Psychiatrists  
[www.rcpsych.ac.uk](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk)
- NHS Choices  
[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

Remember, if you think that **illness** or **medication** is causing poor sleep, or if you think you're relying too much on sleeping tablets, please speak to your doctor or pharmacist for advice and support.

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# How To Improve Your Sleep

Patient Information Leaflet

Grove House Practice  
& Heath Road Surgery

How much sleep do I need?

