

**Sleep: How
can we
make sense
of it?**

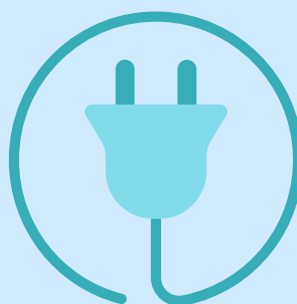
Why is sleep so important?

Sleep is important for our physical and mental health. It allows our mind to digest and make sense of the day's events. It prepares our brain for learning new things the next day. Simply put, sleep is essential for life and getting the proper amount of sleep helps us cope better with whatever life brings our way.

Getting enough sleep is essential for our emotional health. We may start to feel out of sorts and like you are not yourself if you're not sleeping well. It can get harder to solve problems and we may experience more aches and pains, less energy, and less interest in life.

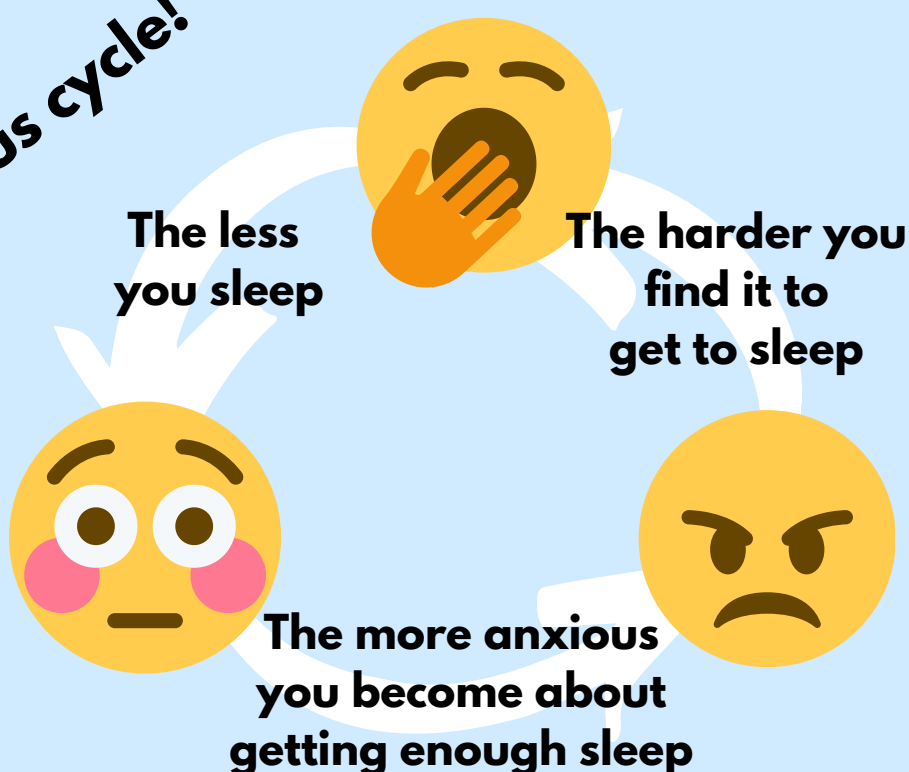


It helps us cope with the day!



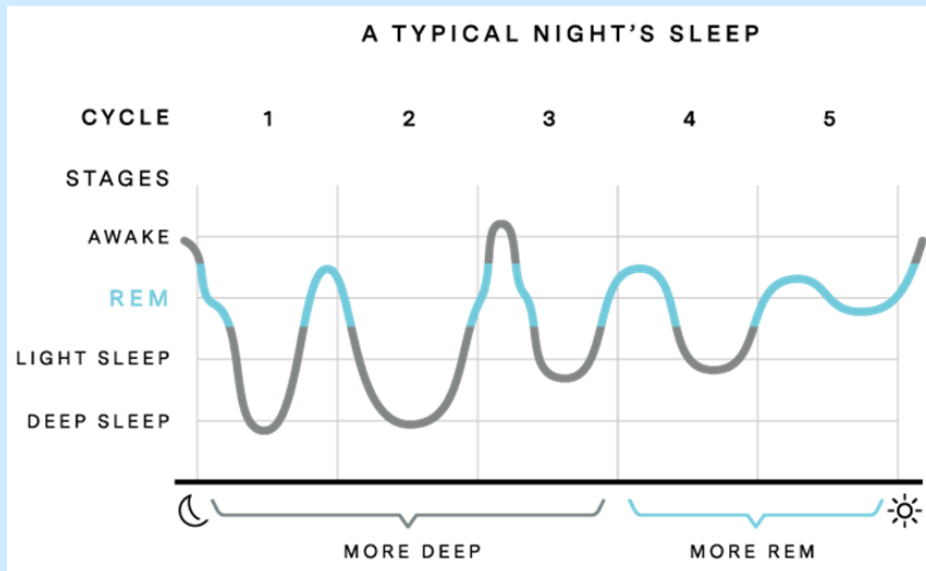
The problem with sleep... zzzZ

It's a vicious cycle!



How can I understand sleep?

Throughout the night we go through different stages of sleep, which are a bit like waves. We have several different waves, or cycles of sleep which last about 90 minutes during the night.



There are different stages in each cycle, which can be broadly explained as light and deep sleep. Then there's REM sleep which is where we dream! It's natural to wake up in between the cycles sometimes, which is why we might wake up a couple of times in the night.

When we go through a cycle and things are different in our environment, we're more likely to wake up. So if we fall to sleep with the TV on, and someone turns it off once we're asleep, we're more likely to wake up at the end of that cycle.

Good sleep is getting to sleep in about 20 - 30 minutes

Good sleep might be a different amount for each person

Good sleep might mean waking up a couple of times

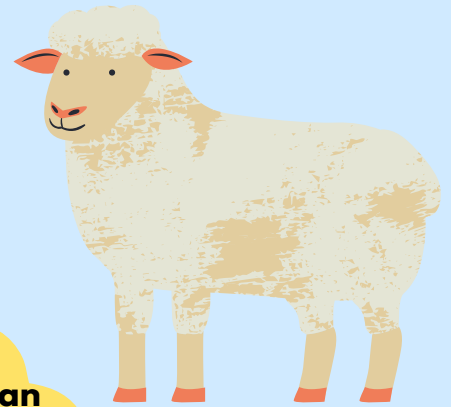


We need to release the hormone melatonin to fall to sleep, which we can only release when it's dark. The light from screens like our phones and TVs stops melatonin from being released.

How much sleep should I be getting each night?

Generally these are the recommended amounts based on our age, but they don't tell us everything!

This question gets asked all the time, and the answer is more complicated than you'd think



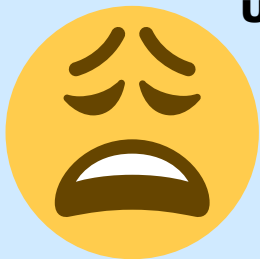
Some people can get 6 hours sleep and function very well

Other people can get 9 hours sleep and still feel tired out!

Age	No. of hours (including naps)
4-12 months	12-16 hours
1-2 years	11-14 hours
3-5 years	10-13 hours
6-12 years	9-12 hours
13-18 years	8-10 hours

It's really common to struggle with sleep!

A lot of young people find sleep difficult - and there is a biological reason! After puberty our internal clock shifts by about 2 hours. Early school start times don't suit our change in biological clock, which can mean young people can find getting up for school really hard

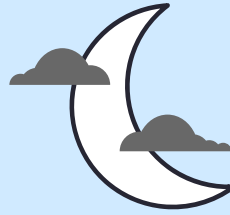


This is due to our circadian rhythms

Things that might stop me sleeping well



Winding down before bed



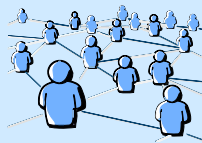
Bedroom too light or dark



Sharing a bedroom with siblings



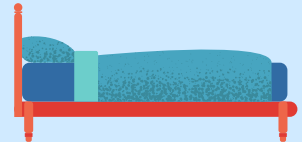
Sleep associations



Using social media until late



Eating starchy or fatty snacks before bed



Uncomfortable bed, bedding or sheets



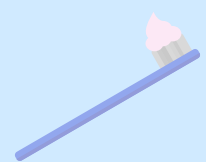
Our biological clock



Being too full or hungry



Socialising until late



Having no or an inconsistent bedtime routine



Tests, exams and revision



Too much screen time before bed



Eating sugary snacks before bed



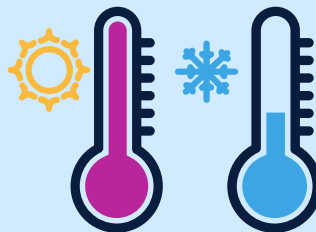
Exercising close to bedtime



Feeling anxious, stressed or worried



Drinking caffeinated drinks



Being too hot or too cold



Becoming dehydrated throughout the night

One or many of these things might be impacting your sleep. Spend a few minutes looking through and picking out any you think might be impacting your sleep.

From looking at the different things that might be impacting on your sleep, make a list here of what things you think might be impacting your sleep...

Two rectangular sticky notes are shown. The one on the left is purple with horizontal blue lines and is held by two yellow tabs at the top. The one on the right is yellow with horizontal orange lines and is held by a single pink tab at the top. They are positioned side-by-side for writing.

The first thing to do is to think about what these things are like now. We do this by completing a sleep diary. Each day for the next week, you will be asked to fill in a diary to detail how you are sleeping, and to think about how often the things you've identified as impacting your sleep happen.



Completing a sleep diary

Remembering to complete any type of diary can be really hard, but can be really helpful. A sleep diary helps us understand your sleep routine better, and figure out what we can target to help you sleep better.

My Sleep Diary

Healthy minds | Sheffield Children's NHS

To complete in the morning

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Time I Went to Bed							
Time I Woke up							
How many times did I wake up in the night?							
Total sleep time							
How did I feel when I woke up? What was my mood?							
What did I do when I first woke up?							

You could use a template like this!



Or maybe you'd prefer to note it down on your phone if you think you'd lose a piece of paper or don't use paper anymore!



These are the things we need to document in the sleep diary



What time you went to bed
What time you woke up
How many times you woke up in the night
Your total sleep time
Your mood during the day
Any targeted points that we thought might be impacting your sleep (notes from the last page)



To complete in the morning



	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Time I Went to Bed							
Time I Woke up							
How many times did I wake up in the night?							
Total sleep time							
How did I feel when I woke up? What was my mood?							
What did I do when I first woke up?							

To complete in the evening



	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
How much caffeine have I had today?							
What was the time of my last caffeinated drink?							
How many minutes of exercise have I done today?							
What did I do in the hour before I went to bed?							
What was my mood like today?							
Any other notes							

Reviewing the sleep diary

Once you've completed your 7 day sleep diary, it's important to review this and see what you notice. Follow the steps below to review your diary.

1) Look through each day in detail.



2) Go through each day and think/talk about your mood on each day and the amount of sleep you got.

3) Go through what happened on the days you feel you slept better.

4) What do you notice about those days?
What do you notice about the days you slept worse?

5) Overall, what you do notice about your sleep this week?



Can you identify any changes you could make to help get better sleep?



Sleep associations

**Sleep associations are exactly what they sound like
Things we associate with sleep!**

We all have sleep associations, like sleeping with a certain number of pillows, needing a duvet to cover themselves, needing it to be completely dark, needing to listen to music or have the TV on...

These are in the most part - not a problem! They help us get to sleep each night.

They can be problem when the sleep associations isn't the same all night

The most common examples are when we fall asleep with the TV on. Then someone in our house turns it off when we've fallen asleep. When we finish that cycle of sleep, if our environment is different, we're more likely to wake up. If we're struggling with sleep, we might keep struggling to get back to sleep without that same sleep association



Put simply, we may have problems sleeping if we need to fall asleep to something that isn't constant all night

Sleep associations

**Sleep associations are exactly what they sound like
Things we associate with sleep!**

**We can think
about any that are
affecting your
sleep quality**

**Note down here
any sleep
associations you
think you have**



1

2

3

4

5

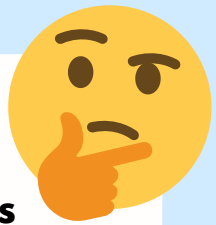
6

7

**Use these to think about what might need
to be included in our sleep plan**




Your bedroom



We associate our bedrooms with many things. It could be that's where we do our homework, where we call our friends, where we play video games, where we put on fashion shows. Our bedrooms can feel like our entire home sometimes!

But what can this mean for sleeping?



All the time we spend in our bedrooms, sat or laid in bed can stop our bodies from thinking our bed and our bedroom is for sleeping - making it even harder to get to sleep. It may seem impossible to spend less time in your bedroom, but doing this, or not spending as much time sat on your bed - **CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE**

Think back to the past three days, how much time did you spend in or on your bed when you weren't sleeping? Ask yourself, could you have spent less time on your bed? Note down here any changes you think you could make to help spend less time sat on your bed. Remember the more we associate our beds with just sleeping, the easier we'll find it to sleep.

Some ideas could be sitting on a beanbag or chair when going on social media, or sitting at a table to do homework.



Wind down time is really important for sleeping well

Routines are really important for setting up helpful sleep associations, and the hour before we go to bed is the most important hour for setting up high quality sleep.

Thinking about your sleep goal, use this space to note down what time you should be winding down for bedtime

- 1) Time I need to get up for school -
- 2) Amount of sleep I'd like to get -
- 3) Time I need to be going to sleep -
- 4) Time I need to think about winding down -

It's important to think about what we can do in our wind down time. The activities should be:

Relaxing

Away from
screens
if possible

Set activities
we enjoy

Write down some of
your ideas here for
your wind down time



- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

My sleep plan

Routines are really important to help convince our brains it's ready for sleep time. Doing the same things each day at the same time can help sync up our circadian rhythms. As tempting as it is to stay up late on the weekends, it's important to try and maintain the routine to help get our sleep on track.

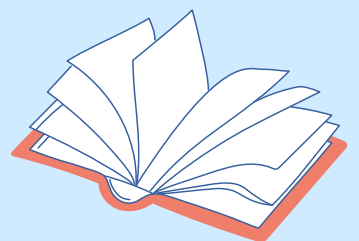
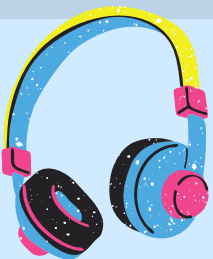


What I need to do in the hour before bed to get ready to sleep

What I need to do throughout the day to get a good sleep

What I need to stop doing during afternoon and evening to get a good sleep

Note here any help you need from friends or family to put your plan into place



Reviewing my sleep plan

It's important to remember that changes to sleep don't happen overnight (excuse the pun). They take time! Sometimes we might feel frustrated, and want to give up on the plan but it's important we keep trying for a few weeks.

Thinking about the last week in detail, ask yourself these questions to review the sleep plan:

- 1) Are there any days where I slept better/worse?
- 2) What did I do differently on those days?
- 3) What in my sleep plan did I find helpful?
- 4) What in my sleep plan did I not do?
- 5) What in my sleep plan did I find very difficult?
- 6) Are there any small changes I'd like to make for the following week?

Even if you haven't made all the changes on your plan, you've done great to attempt to make changes! Even small changes can have big impacts



Top Tip

Remember to carry on completing a sleep diary whilst you use your sleep plan. Sometimes we don't think things are any different - but comparing sleep diaries might show us otherwise.

What about actually falling asleep?

There are many reasons we might be struggling to fall asleep. It might be around having an inconsistent routine or our brains not being ready for sleep. The sleep routine above may help with that. But sometimes, we can't fall asleep because we're worried, stressed or anxious.

The problem with sleep...zzZ



It's completely normal to feel worried, stressed or anxious. They are normal feelings that everyone experiences. But they become a problem when they interfere with our lives, like stopping us from sleeping. These can even become vicious cycles!



What can I do if I can't sleep because I'm feeling worried or anxious

There are two main things to try to help manage worry at night time.

1

Practicing relaxation



2

Practicing worry time



Practicing Relaxation

There are lots of different ways to practice relaxation and everyone is different.



Here are some ideas that might help.

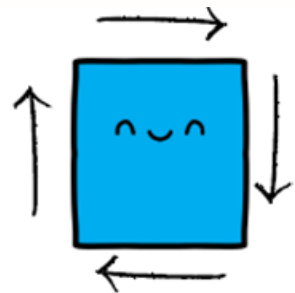
Visualisation

Try to picture a picture, a scene, a memory which is pleasant and makes you feel safe. Focus entirely on this scene, thinking about all five of your senses. Ask yourself, what can I see here? What can I hear? What can I smell? What can I touch? What can I taste?



Box Breathing

Imagine you are drawing a square, trace the square on your duvet. Breathe in while counting 1, 2, 3, 4 as you draw the top line then pause. Breathe out while counting 1, 2, 3, 4 as you draw the line down the side and then pause. Carry this on around the square, breathing in/out along the straights and pausing at each corner.



Progressive Muscle Relaxation



Starting with your toes clench your muscles really tightly for 5 seconds. Then let go gradually (over the course of about 15 seconds), breathing slowly and concentrating on the feeling in your toes. Then do the same thing with your entire foot. When that's complete, move on to your calves, thighs, and slowly moving all the way up your body to your face. Some people prefer to listen to guided progressive muscle relaxation on YouTube.

Some of these ideas might sound silly, but they can really help us reduce our anxieties, stress and tension so we can relax and focus on sleep.

Practicing Worry Time

Worry time gives you time each day to talk through your worries. The more you use worry time, the less your worries will impact you throughout the day or when you're trying to sleep.

At bed time



If you find yourself worrying when you're trying to sleep, you can note your worries down using pen and paper, or maybe on your phone. The key is to make sure you write them down somewhere. This is your worry list, you can add to this list during the day if you have other worries. Then tell yourself "I have time to worry about this tomorrow, now I will change my attention and go to sleep". Try practicing one of the relaxation techniques to help.

The next day

Plan yourself time each day to worry about the worries you've noted down the night before or during the day. This time should not be close to bed time, and the same each day or every day you decide to use worry time.



Worry time

At your decided time, spend a set amount of time going through your worries. Think about if the thing you were worried about happened, or if you still need to worry about it. Simply, give yourself time to worry! You may notice that some worries aren't worries anymore!



After worry time

The most important thing to remember is this! After worry time, change your attention and do not continue to worry. This could be by doing a relaxation techniques, or an activity you enjoy. It's important to do something! Then, when you add worries to the list for worry time, each time you should change your attention afterwards.



Let's do it

My worry time will be at (time):

It will last for (number of minutes):

I will catch my worries by (what will you use?):

Top Tip

To refocus your attention, try to take deep breaths and think: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. Notice 5 things you can see, 4 things you can feel, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell and 1 thing you can taste. This gives you chance to calm down before focusing on a current or new task.