



## Sleep Easy

### **1. Go to bed when you are sleepy.**

Many people make a decision to go to bed after hours of work or study without thinking about their body's needs. Sleep comes in waves, so like a surfer you must catch the wave of sleepiness. Sometimes if you try to go to sleep after vigorous activity you can be quite worked up and not be ready for sleep.

Prepare yourself for sleep:

- Sign off on the day's work – tick off tasks completed, make a list of things to do tomorrow, meetings to attend etc., and put this away. If you find that your mind keeps on returning to a task, remind yourself that you will follow up on that in the morning.
- Relax – have a cup of warm milk or herbal tea, read a restful book or magazine, listen to quiet music, have a shower. Do all this calmly.
- Prepare your bed for sleep – make sure it is a comfortable and relaxing space.
- Avoid big meals and stimulants like tea, coffee, alcohol, energy drinks or cigarettes before bed.

### **2. Make your bed a place of rest and relaxation.**

It is advised that you don't read or listen to music in bed before you go to sleep. However, if you find that music and light reading helps you to relax continue to do this. Your bed needs to be a place for rest and relaxation, so do not do any work or study in bed.

### **3. Get up if you are still awake and restless after half an hour.**

- Do something quiet like read a magazine, have a cup of warm milk or herbal tea.
- Avoid high-energy activities and stimulants.
- Go back to bed when you are feeling sleepy and try to go to sleep again.
- Don't worry if you're not sleepy – more sleep is lost through worrying and rumination. However, if you are lying in bed feeling relaxed and are OK about this, then stay in bed as long as this feeling remains. You will fall asleep.
- Remember that just lying in bed relaxing is almost as restorative as sleeping.

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**4. Try the tips in 2 & 3 if you wake during the night and can't go back to sleep.**

Don't be tempted to get up and do anything too exciting like emailing friends, surfing the net or doing more work.

**5. Establish a routine.**

Get up at the same time each morning and go to bed at roughly the same time each night. If possible, maintain this routine on the weekends as your body clock will be disturbed if your sleep patterns radically altered. Set an alarm clock if necessary. Try not to nap during the day as this takes the edge of sleepiness at night. Also don't oversleep – this will not make you more alert, rather the opposite. It will make you feel more tired and lethargic.

**6. Do some exercise during the day every day, but never late at night.**

Choose something you enjoy and exercise with a friend to maintain enthusiasm on a regular basis, three or more times per week.

**7. Do some relaxation before bed.**

Use a relaxation tape, gentle breathing exercises, yoga or meditation to calm your mind and relax your body. Develop your own mantra to focus your thoughts on relaxation and sleep. A useful mantra to repeat to yourself is: "I am resting and relaxing in bed. This is almost as good as sleeping". If you do experience intrusive and distressing thoughts, refocus your attention on your mantra. Do not wait for sleep difficulties. Practice the mantra even when you are sleeping well.

**8. Think about your physical environment.**

Is your bedroom a calming and relaxing place, conducive to restful sleep? If not, it may help to adjust the lighting, change the bed covers, pillow, reduce or remove other interrupting sounds like TV or radio.

**9. Get help if you've got worries/things on your mind.**

If you are going through a difficult time or dealing with a stressful life event, it may be useful to talk to a Links Psychologist, by contacting us on **9378 8559**, for a confidential consultation.