

A Good Sleep Guide

During the evening

- Put the day to rest. Think it through. Tie up “loose ends” in your mind and plan ahead. Writing things down may help.
- Wind down during the course of the evening, e.g. through reading or listening to music
- Don't sleep or doze on the sofa or in a chair. Keep your sleep for bedtime
- Don't drink too much tea or coffee and only have a light snack for supper. Don't drink alcohol to aid sleep – although people often feel sleepy after drinking a lot of alcohol it usually upsets it
- Make sure your bed and bedroom are comfortable – not too cold and not too warm
- Exercise early in the day. Twenty to thirty minutes of exercise every day can help you sleep, but don't exercise too near to bedtime. Exercise stimulates the body and aerobic activity before bedtime may make falling asleep more difficult.
- Check your iron level. Iron deficient women tend to have more problems sleeping so if your blood is iron poor, a supplement might help your health and your ability to sleep.
- Check whether any medicines you are taking may be affecting your sleep. Some drugs can affect sleep because they are stimulants. Examples are certain drugs for asthma and for migraine, check with your pharmacist or doctor.
- Cigarettes – smoking last thing at night can keep you awake as nicotine is a stimulant. If you do smoke, try and have your last cigarette at least 4 hours before bedtime

At bedtime

- Go to bed when you are “sleepy tired” and not before
- Do not watch TV or read in bed, keep these activities for another room
- Set the alarm for the same time every day, seven days a week, at least until your sleep pattern settles down
- Put the light out when you go to bed and make sure there is no light coming in through the curtains
- Don't try to fall asleep. Sleep is not something you can switch on deliberately but if you try to switch it on you can switch it off!
- Hide your clock. A big, illuminated digital clock may cause you to focus on the time and make you feel stressed and anxious. Place your clock so you can't see the time when you are in bed.

If you have problems getting to sleep

- Remember that sleep problems are quite common and they are not as damaging as you might think. Try not to get upset, frustrated or worry about not getting enough sleep.
- If you're awake in bed for more than 20 mins then get up and go into another room, have a malty drink like Horlicks. Do something relaxing for a while and don't worry about tomorrow.
- Go back to bed when you feel “sleepy tired”
- A good sleep pattern may take a while to establish but persevere with the tips and be confident that you will achieve it in time.