

Sleep Hygiene

1. Try to establish a regular sleep pattern

Set the time you wake up using an alarm clock every day.

Go to bed at regular times every day.

Turn the light out soon after going to bed.

Go to bed when you feel tired but not completely exhausted.

2. Get up out of bed if you are not sleeping

If you are struggling to fall asleep in bed, get up after 20-30 minutes and leave the bedroom. Try a relaxing activity and return to bed only when you feel sleepy.

Repeat this action until you have fallen asleep.

3. Rest periods

Rest is important and pacing your activity involves using short periods of rest to break up activity. This period of rest can involve sitting and relaxing. It should not have to involve going to bed to sleep.

4. Daytime sleeping

If you normally sleep during the day try to decrease the length of the sleep gradually. Use an alarm clock to time the sleeps.

If you are reducing your sleeping time at night or day time sleeps, do this gradually.

5. Exercise

Exercise during the day will help 'tire' the body in preparation for a good sleep.

Try not to exercise up to 3 hours before sleeping as exercise will awaken the body.

Get natural daylight during the day.

6. Diet

Avoid stimulants such as caffeine, chocolate and smoking just before bed.

Eat regularly through the day, and avoid eating straight before going to bed.

Reduce your alcohol intake before bed as alcohol reduces sleep quality. Warm milky drinks can help sleep.

7. Manage Stress

Try relaxation methods before bed e.g. relaxing music/meditation tapes/warm baths.

Try not to use bedtime as a time to reflect on the day, this should be done before getting into bed. Have a wind-down period of approximately 90 minutes before going to bed. Use a bedtime routine every night so that these wind-down actions become associated with sleep.

8. Try not to worry

Worrying, especially about not sleeping, will keep you awake and further disturb sleep. Try to ignore unhelpful thoughts.

9. Environment

Keep your bedroom a place to go at bed time to sleep.

Avoid watching TV, making phone calls, reading and eating in bed if sleep is a problem.

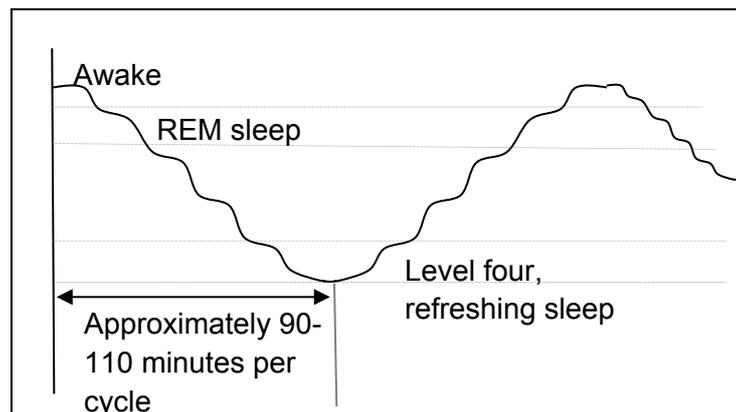
Ensure your bedroom is clutter free and a relaxing room for sleep. Ensure your bed is comfortable and your bedroom should be quiet, a suitable temperature and dark - use ear plugs, eye masks or black out blinds to reduce disturbances.

Stages of Sleep

When asleep, our bodies go through five different stages of sleep. The first phase, Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep is the lightest form of sleep and is when most dreams occur.

There are then four stages of non-REM sleep, which the body goes through in a cyclical pattern. It is only when the body reaches stage four sleep that it becomes refreshed.

People who are woken frequently spend less time in stage four sleep, which is why they often wake up feeling un-refreshed. Alcohol also decreases the amount of stage four sleep, which is why we feel un-refreshed after drinking to excess.



Key Messages

There are methods that you can implement to improve your sleeping habits.

Breaking bad sleeping patterns will not happen overnight. You will need to keep practising the above techniques in order to see positive changes.