



TEN TIPS ON... GETTING A GOOD NIGHTS SLEEP

1. Have a regular sleep pattern

Try to go to bed at around the same time every evening and get up at around the same time every morning. Improved sleep will not happen as soon as changes are made. But if good sleep habits are maintained, sleep will certainly get better. Find what time works for you and stick with it.

2. Spend the right amount of time in bed

Most adults need about 7 to 8 hours sleep every night. Some require more and some less. Many poor sleepers spend much more than 8 hours in bed and this makes fragmented sleep a habit. Except if you have lengthy sleep requirements, limit your time in bed to no more than 8.5 hours. If you often take hours to fall asleep, go to bed later. Remember that children need more sleep than adults.

3. Bed is for sleeping, not entertainment

Electronic devices such as smartphones can interfere with your sleep. It is better not to sleep with your TV or other devices on. Your mind needs to be in the habit of knowing that if you are in bed, you are there to sleep. Try to avoid using your computer or other electronic screens within one hour of bedtime.



4. Give yourself a wind down period

Have a buffer zone before bedtime. Sort out any problems well before going to bed. Exercise is fine, but not too late in the evening.

Find a relaxation technique that works for you and practice it regularly, during your wind down period.

5. Make sure your bedroom is comfortable

You should have a quiet, dark room with comfortable bedding and good temperature control.

6. Avoid stimulants

Things such as alcohol, caffeine and cigarettes are all things you should avoid in the evening if you want a good night sleep. Alcohol may help you to get off to sleep, but will disrupt your sleep during the night. Caffeine will linger in your system for up to 6 hours and the nicotine in cigarettes is a stimulant that can keep you awake.

7. Avoid daytime naps

Sleeping during the day will make it much more difficult to sleep well at night. If a nap is absolutely necessary, for example because of a late night, then limit this to about twenty minutes. Make sure that you are awake for at least 4 hours before going back to bed. If it can be helped don't allow yourself to fall asleep in front of the TV.

8. Don't lie awake watching the clock

It's easy to fall into the habit of clock watching. We've all had a night where we've thought "if I fall asleep now, I'll have 8 hours sleep" and ended up getting frustrated with ourselves for not being able to fall asleep and before you know it an hour has passed and you're back to square one. Watching the time on a clock just makes you anxious about not being asleep. Resist the temptation to look at the time on your various electronic devices or alarm clocks.

9. Avoid sleeping pills except in exceptional circumstances

Medication does not fix the cause of your sleeping problem. If you are having continued trouble falling or staying asleep and it is affecting your quality of life drastically you might be considering medication, but always consult a doctor before taking anything.

10. Talk to a professional

If you are still having trouble sleeping after trying all of these tips, if you have persistent problems with mood, if you have excessive daytime sleepiness, restlessness in bed, severe snoring or wakening unrefreshed despite what should be adequate length sleep, make sure that you go and see your doctor because there might be an underlying cause.

