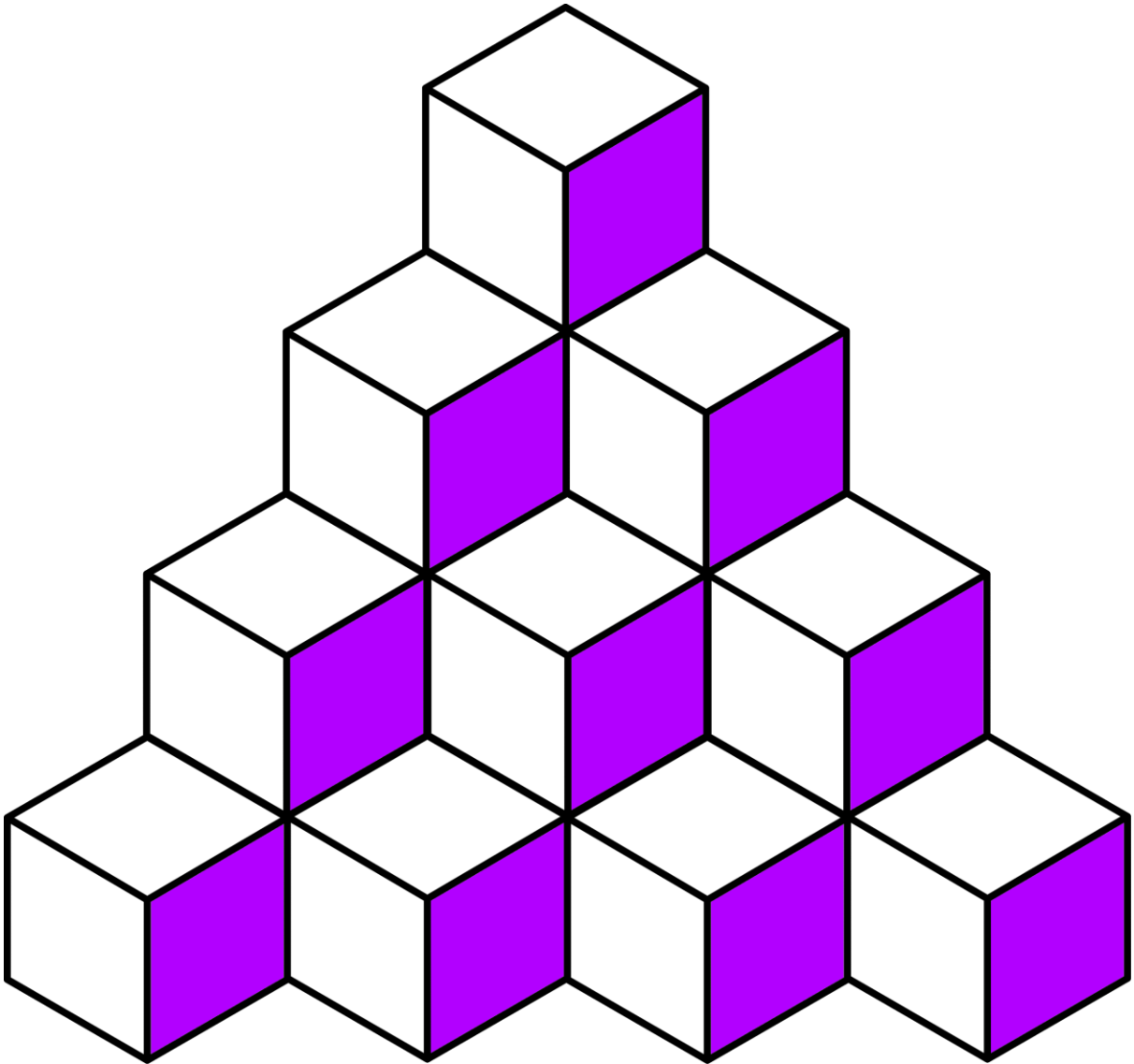


SLEEP

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INFORMATION SHEET

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A good night's sleep?



How you feel during the day is influenced by how well you sleep at night. After a sleepless night you might wake up feeling like a couple of the Seven Dwarves: Grumpy and Sleepy - read our tips to help you sleep better!

How much is enough?

There are few hard and fast rules, though most adults seem to need about seven to nine hours of sleep a night. Some people seem to be able to function with as little as six, and there are those who don't seem to feel okay until they've had ten hours sleep. What works for one person might not work for another. The key is to find the right amount of sleep for you.

On average:

- New-born babies sleep up to 18 - 21 hours per day
- 3 - 5 year olds sleep 11 - 13 hours per day
- Pre-teens need about 11 hours
- Teenagers need 9 -11 hours

Sleep problems

If you don't get enough sleep, you may start to feel:

- Tired all the time
- Sleepy during the day
- Unable to concentrate
- Indecisive
- Low in mood

Disruption of your body clock or (or *circadian rhythm*) due to shift work or frequent travel across time zones has been linked to obesity, diabetes, depression, heart disease, and cancer.

A large scale study of sleep patterns (the *Harvard Study*) found that nurses who worked both day and night-shifts had a more than 10% increased risk of death.

What is insomnia?

Insomnia simply means being awake when you want to be asleep. You might have insomnia if, on a regular basis:

- You take more than 30 minutes to fall asleep, even when you're tired
(**initial or early insomnia**)
- You wake up during the night and can't get back to sleep
(**middle insomnia**)
- You wake up too early and find it very hard to get back to sleep again
(**late insomnia**)

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Insomnia isn't simply a matter of how many hours of sleep you get, or of how long it takes to fall asleep. People vary in their satisfaction with sleep.

Insomnia may be '**transient**', '**intermittent**' or '**chronic**'. Insomnia lasting from one night to a few weeks is usually called 'transient'.

If transient insomnia occurs from time to time, the insomnia is said to be 'intermittent'. Insomnia is considered to be 'chronic' if it occurs on most nights of the week and lasts for a month or more.

'**Secondary insomnia**' is sleeplessness as a result of another problem – for example asthma, anxiety or depression. Many people find they sleep poorly when stressed. It's common to find that stress, anxiety and worry can lead to initial insomnia, while anger and depression are more often associated with middle or late insomnia. There are no hard and fast rules though.

If you're not sleeping well, ask yourself about your emotions. Ask yourself whether you may be feeling especially low, anxious or stressed?

Fix your sleeping space

Room temperature



According to Chris Idzikowski of the Edinburgh Sleep Clinic the ideal bedroom temperature is about 18° C (64.4° F). Above about 24° C and your brain won't send the correct signals for sleep. Too cold (below 12° C) and the cold may wake you up.

Use the right duvet

Have both a 'summer' and a 'winter' duvet. A 10 - 13.5 tog winter duvet may be too warm for the summer; a 4.5 tog might be just right.

Make sure you have plenty of ventilation

Try opening a window, even in winter. Fresh air encourages sleep, so long as the room doesn't get too cold or the cold doesn't make you wheezy.

Choose the right bed

An average person spends 25 years of their life in bed! They also change position about fifty times and sweat about 1/3 of a litre (half a pint) of liquid each night. The British Sleep Society recommend choosing a good, supportive bed with a firm mattress. Your mattress or futon should be changed every 5 - 10 years or so. Futons tend to get firmer with age and should be turned and aired regularly.

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Choose bed linen wisely

Cotton and linen are best as they absorb more moisture and can help with sweating. Pillows should be changed regularly; some say every six to twelve months.

Consider natural remedies

You could sprinkle a tiny amount of lavender oil on your pillow or spray some in the air. Research shows it can improve the quality of sleep. Hops, camomile and peppermint can also help. It's important to talk to your doctor or midwife before using essential oils if you're pregnant, have allergies or breathing problems.

Wear comfortable night clothes

Nightwear should be loose and made of natural fibres. Bed socks can be a good idea - warm feet signal healthy blood flow to the brain, inducing restful sleep.

Do you really need an alarm clock?

Turn your alarm down or preferably off. Anticipating a shrill alarm is stressful and can make insomnia worse. If you're getting enough sleep, you should wake up naturally without an alarm. If you need an alarm clock to wake you up on time, you may need to set an earlier bedtime. As with your bedtime, try to maintain a regular wake-up time, even on weekends.

Curtains

Curtains or blinds should be nice and thick. Ideally, a bedroom should be totally dark until 4am. Darkness stimulates the pineal gland to produce the hormone melatonin, which induces sleep. Switch off your landing light,

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too - even low levels of light coming under a door can keep you awake. Special 'blackout' blinds can help if there's a lot of light pollution around. Avoid checking your smartphone or tablet when it's dark – it stimulates the mind and its backlight can trigger wakefulness.

Noise

Some people prefer total quiet and use earplugs or muffs, others prefer some background noise. Some people find a 'white noise' generator can help, especially if they are prone to tinnitus. Smartphone 'apps' are plentiful that can generate background noise, or a radio tuned to FM and slightly off-station can generate a noise some may find helpful.

No televisions, tablets or computers in the bedroom

Don't have a computer or TV in the bedroom. Your mind must get the message that the bedroom is a place for rest, so make sure it's as peaceful as possible. Avoid using your bedroom for anything other than sleep and lovemaking. You don't want your bedroom to become a place you associate with work!

Declutter

To optimise sleep, your room should be tidy, clean and free from clutter. Clutter is a great energy drainer. You know it's there, even though you might try to ignore it. Clearing clutter makes us feel organised, and feeling organised is good for peace of mind, which aids restful sleep. Regular vacuuming and damp dusting may seem a chore, but night time asthma and allergies can interrupt sleep. If you get wheezy at night, you may find it helps to remove any carpets from your bedroom, as they can be a haven for dust mites.

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Partners

If your other half is a fidget or a snorer, consider separate beds. People who have poor sleep have higher rates of divorce and separate beds can even improve, rather than hamper, a healthy sex life.

Before bed

Increase light exposure during the day



- Take your sunglasses off
- Spend more time outside during daylight
- Let light into your home or office
- If necessary, use a light therapy box

Have a warm bath

This will soothe you and relax your muscles. Perhaps avoid showering in the evening, which might wake you up.

Avoid alcohol

Alcohol encourages the production of norepinephrine, a neurotransmitter released in response to excitement and stress. Hours after drinking, a burst of norepinephrine can disrupt your sleep and is likely to wake you earlier than usual.

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Don't worry!

An easy technique to stop worrying thoughts is to speak positive thoughts aloud. Speaking tends to overrule thinking and can stop negative thoughts. Try this now - start going through the alphabet in your head. Start at 'A'. When you reach the letter 'J' start counting out loud. You will find you stop thinking about the alphabet because your speaking overrides your thoughts.

Try this technique if you start worrying about something when you're trying to sleep. Instead of thinking 'the bill is due and I don't have the money', say aloud 'I don't know where it will come from but I'll get creative to find the money and I will find it.' Instead of thinking 'my child is going off the rails' say aloud 'my child is strong willed, which is a great asset and they will succeed in whatever they do'.

Adopt a bedtime routine

Relax, take a bath, read and build in a quiet period before bedtime. A milky drink at night time can help get us off to sleep. Try to get to bed around the same time each day. Don't break the routine on weekends. If you want to change your bedtime, help your body adjust by making small changes, such as 10 - 15 minutes earlier or later each day. Record any late TV or radio you don't want to miss or 'catch up' on the internet during the evening.

Avoid too much 'catnapping' during the day, although if you do need to make up for a few lost hours, opt for a daytime nap rather than sleeping late.

This strategy allows you to pay off your 'sleep debt' without disturbing your natural sleeping rhythm, which can result in insomnia. While taking a nap can

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be a great way to recharge, it can make insomnia worse. If insomnia is a problem for you, consider eliminating napping. If you must nap, do it in the early afternoon, and limit it to about thirty minutes.

Avoid eating heavily before bedtime

Avoid tea, alcohol, coffee, chocolate and soft drinks containing caffeine. For some people a light snack before bed can help promote sleep. When you pair tryptophan-containing foods with carbohydrates, it can help calm the brain and allow you to sleep better.

Tryptophan containing foods include:

- Nuts
- Seeds
- Tofu
- Cheese
- Red meat
- Chicken and turkey
- Fish
- Oats
- Beans and lentils
- Eggs

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For some, eating before bed can lead to indigestion and make sleep more difficult. Experiment to find the best foods and time to eat.

If you have a bedtime snack, try:

- Half a turkey sandwich
- A small bowl of whole-grain, low-sugar cereal
- Muesli or Granola with low-fat milk or yogurt
- A banana

Learn relaxation skills

Relaxation can be beneficial for everyone, especially for those struggling with sleep. Practicing relaxation before bed is a great way to wind down, calm the mind, and prepare for sleep. Some simple relaxation techniques include:

- Deep breathing - close your eyes, and take deep, slow breaths, making each breath deeper than the last.
- Progressive muscle relaxation - starting with your toes, tense all the muscles as tightly as you can, and then completely relax. Work your way up from your feet to the top of your head.
- Visualise a peaceful place - close your eyes and imagine a place or activity that is calming and peaceful for you. Concentrate on how relaxed this place or activity makes you feel.
- Learn mindfulness - check your library or the internet for local courses.

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Break negative associations

If you can't sleep you may come to dread bedtime, expecting to toss and turn for hours. Bedtime is triggering a negative response; this method teaches you to use the bed only for sleep and for sex.

You're not allowed to read, use your laptop or tablet, watch television, text or speak on the phone.

Go to bed when you're tired, and if you're not asleep after 20 minutes, get up and do something else such as listen to relaxing music or breathing and muscle relaxing exercises.

Don't sit where there are bright lights. When you feel sleepy again, return to bed. The idea is to build a strong association between bed and sleep. Eventually you'll be able to fall asleep soon after getting into bed and learn to look forward to bedtime.

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Stop smoking

Smokers find it more difficult to sleep and wake up more often in the night.

Exercise

Regular, moderate exercise such as swimming or walking can help relieve the day's stresses and strains - but not too close to bedtime or it may keep you awake. Exposure to natural daylight helps too, out-of-doors activity is a very good idea.

Melatonin is a naturally occurring hormone controlled by light exposure that helps regulate your sleep cycle. Melatonin production is controlled by exposure to light. The brain secretes more melatonin in the evening, which makes you sleepy, and less during the day when it's light and you need to stay alert. Modern life can disrupt your body's natural production of melatonin and with it, your sleep cycle.

Spending a long time in an office away from natural light can impact your daytime wakefulness and make your brain sleepy. Bright lights at night from the TV or computer can suppress the body's production of melatonin and make it harder to sleep. However, there are ways you can boost your body's production of melatonin, and keep your brain on schedule.

Turn off your television and computer

Many people use the television to fall asleep or relax at the end of the day, though this can be a mistake. Not only does the light suppress melatonin production, but television can stimulate the mind, rather than relaxing it. Try listening to music or audio books instead, or practicing relaxation exercises. If

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your favourite TV show is on late at night, record it for viewing earlier in the day.

Change your light bulbs

Avoid bright lights before bed; use low-wattage bulbs instead. Red bulbs are less disturbing than white or blue lights.

90-minute sleep cycles

The sleep cycle contains five distinct phases, divided into four stages of non-REM (rapid eye movement) sleep, followed by a stage of REM sleep (in which we dream).

Each of these cycles takes about 90 minutes, followed by a brief time when we are relatively wakeful, before a new cycle starts again. This process is repeated about four or five times a night.

In other words, if we were to sleep completely naturally with no alarm clocks or other disturbances, we would wake up, on average, after a multiple of 90 minutes sleep.

This means that you will feel most refreshed if you wake up at the end of a 90-minute sleep cycle, because you will be closest to your normal waking state.

To increase the chances of this happening, work out when you want to wake up, then count back in 90-minute blocks to find a time near to when you want to go to sleep.

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Imagine you want to wake at 8am and wish to go to sleep around midnight.
Counting back in 90-minute segments from 8am would look like this:

8 am > 6.30 am > 5.00 am > 3.30 am > 2.00 am > 12.30 am > 11 pm

You should aim to fall asleep around either 11pm or 12.30am in order to feel especially refreshed when you wake at 8am in the morning.

Waking time	For 8-9 hours' sleep	For 9-10 hours' sleep
To wake up at 5am	Fall asleep at 20:30	Fall asleep at 19:00
To wake up at 6am	Fall asleep at 21:30	Fall asleep at 20:00
To wake up at 7am	Fall asleep at 22:30	Fall asleep at 21:00
To wake up at 8am	Fall asleep at 23:30	Fall asleep at 22:00
To wake up at 9am	Fall asleep at 00:30	Fall asleep at 23:00
To wake up at 10am	Fall asleep at 01:30	Fall asleep at 00:00

So, if you need to wake up at 7 a.m., you can either go to sleep at 9 p.m. (if you need more sleep) or at 10:30 p.m.

In bed

Stay out of your head

Once awake, the key to getting back to sleep is continuing to cue your body for sleep, so remain in bed in a relaxed position. Try not to stress over being awake or try too hard to fall asleep again, because stress and anxiety encourages your body to stay awake. A good way to stop 'overthinking' is to focus on physical sensations in the body. If you're wide awake and really can't stop thinking, it's probably better to get up.

Make relaxation, not sleep, your goal

If you find it hard to get back to sleep, try a relaxation technique such as visualization, deep breathing, or meditation, which can be done without getting out of bed. Remind yourself that although they're not a replacement for sleep, rest and relaxation will still help rejuvenate the body.

Don't read from a backlit device at night (such as a phone, tablet or iPad)

If you use a portable electronic device to read, choose one that is not backlit, or turn its light off, use another light source such as a bedside lamp instead if you must.

When it's time to sleep, make sure the room is dark

The darker it is, the better you'll sleep. Cover electrical displays, use heavy curtains or shades to block light from windows, or try a sleep mask to cover your eyes.

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Use a torch to go to the bathroom at night

If you wake up during the night to use the bathroom, use a torch rather than turning on the light - as long as it's safe to do so - keeping the light to a minimum will make it easier to get back to sleep.

On waking in the night

We tend to think of a good night's sleep as seven or eight hours of unbroken sleep, waking up refreshed and ready for action. However there's a school of thought that suggests it can be perfectly natural to sleep for a few hours, wake for an hour or two, then return to sleep. Historian and anthropologist Roger Ekirch, in his book *'At Day's Close: Night In Times Past'*, writes about *'segmented sleep'* – a first sleep of about two hours after dusk, followed by a wakeful period and then a second sleep till dawn.

This pattern of sleep was common before industrial society. While awake, we would get up, use the toilet, visit neighbours, read, pray or make love. Ekirch and other researchers believe this may be our natural sleep pattern, one we have lost since the advent of electric lighting and the industrialisation of society.

In any event this period of wakefulness can be a healthy, pleasant, creative and productive time if we can enjoy it, rather than simply spending it fretting in bed.

If you can't sleep, you might want to try getting up and doing a few simple jobs, then return to bed when you're sleepy. Don't worry about not sleeping.

Self-help resources

There are many good books and websites that can help. Your GP, practice nurse or mental health practitioner will be able to recommend from a range of helpful material.

If you've tried the tips above and are still struggling with sleep, you might want to consult with a professional. Consider scheduling a visit with a sleep doctor if, despite your best efforts at self-help, you are troubled by any of the following symptoms:

- Persistent daytime sleepiness or fatigue.
- Extreme lethargy.
- Loud snoring accompanied by pauses in breathing.
- Difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep.
- Unrefreshing sleep.
- Frequent morning headaches.
- 'Crawling' sensations in your legs or arms at night.
- Inability to move while falling asleep or waking up (*sleep paralysis*).
- Physically acting out your dreams during sleep.
- Falling asleep at inappropriate times.

Act now!

The sooner you get a good night's sleep, the sooner you'll feel better! If you've been affected by anything you've read here, or if you've tried all the advice here but still can't sleep, contact your GP or a health professional for extra information or to get on the road to recovery today.

Disclaimer

This material is for information only and should not be used for the diagnosis or treatment of medical conditions. We have used all reasonable care in compiling the information but make no warranty as to its accuracy. We recommend you consult a doctor or other health care professional for the diagnosis and treatment of medical conditions, or if you are at all concerned about your health.

Written by: SC

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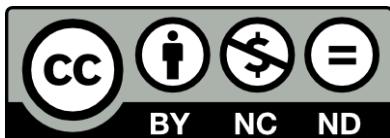
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