

12 useful sleep tips

- 1) **Avoid clock watching:** tempting though it is to look at the time when one wakes up in the night, it is a guaranteed way to make the mind active, and lessen the likelihood of falling back to sleep
- 2) **Avoid alcohol before bedtime:** although it may speed the onset of sleep, alcohol will cause more awakenings during the night once it is metabolised, as it disrupts the normal sleep cycles
- 3) **Only go to bed when tired:** rather than have a set time to go to bed, waiting until one feels physically sleepy will ease the process of getting to sleep. By restricting time spent in the bedroom, it helps consolidate sleep, improves sleep quality and how refreshed one feels the next day.
- 4) **Set an alarm to always get up at the same time:** no matter how little sleep one got during the night, it is important to set an 'anchor' for the next day. This includes getting up at same time at the weekend. This way our internal biological clock is reset to help achieve regular sleep onset.
- 5) **Don't take your worries to bed:** Set aside time in the evening to deal with any worries from the day, or other buzzing thoughts that need to be worked through. A pre-bedtime routine including time to relax stops the mind hijacking sleep, and enhances deeper sleep.
- 6) **Exercise daily:** feeling physically tired will help fall asleep and deepen sleep. Avoid doing vigorous exercise within 3 hours of bedtime as it can be overstimulating.
- 7) **Avoid stimulants such as caffeine and nicotine:** stop intake of caffeine 6 hours prior to bedtime. Be warned that caffeine is also in some not so obvious products including certain medications and chocolate.
- 8) **Eat regular meals:** Don't go to bed hungry or overfull. If a bit peckish have a light snack – carbohydrate or tryptophan rich foods assist sleep, but avoid greasy and spicy foods.
- 9) **Sleep promoting environment:** a comfortable bed, dark, quiet bedroom, which is not too hot or cold (between 18-20 degrees Celsius is optimum) will help sleep.
- 10) **Associate bedroom as place for sleep and sexual activity:** this helps re-condition the brain to see the bed as a place for sleeping only. Avoid watching TV, reading, listening to radio, eating or other habits in this room.
- 11) **No napping during the day:** as it disturbs the normal pattern of sleep and wakefulness
- 12) **Get adequate exposure to natural light during the day:** light helps maintain a healthy sleep-wake cycle.