Sleep problems are very common. Some people become distressed when they feel they are not getting a good night’s sleep but they may have unrealistic expectations or incorrect assumptions about sleep.

**HOW MUCH SLEEP DO WE NEED?**

This depends on several factors including our age, temperament and the amount of physical activity we do.

**DIFFERENT TYPES OF SLEEP**

There are different stages of sleep and while it can feel particularly refreshing when we experience the deeper stages, this isn’t essential to our wellbeing. Sometimes people are actually in the lighter stages of sleep when they think they are still awake.

**RECIPES FOR IMPROVING SLEEP**

**Identify the Reason and Take Action**

- If medical, e.g. pain or a possible side effect of medication, consult your doctor.
- If emotional, e.g. preoccupied with events going on in your life now or in the past, access counselling or self help material.
• Lifestyle, e.g. over use of caffeine, cigarettes, alcohol or drugs: adjust your intake. Consider taking more exercise during the day so you feel tired at night.

DEVELOP GOOD SLEEP HABITS

• Try to make your surroundings conducive for sleep: e.g. temperature, noise and light levels, comfort of mattress.
• Get into a pre sleep routine when you wind down and prepare for bed. Reading a book, having a bath, listening to relaxing music or a relaxation CD can help. Herbal or milky drinks may too, but not if you will then need to visit the toilet later.
• If you can’t sleep, don’t watch the clock and become agitated. Get up and do something else, not too stimulating, until you feel sleepy.
• Don’t stay in bed late to compensate for a disrupted night, or go to bed really early the next night. You need to teach your body when to fall asleep and when to get up. Establishing a consistent pattern is key to this.
• Taking naps during the day can also make it more difficult to sleep at night and mitigates against forming a regular sleeping pattern.