

6. TROUBLE SLEEPING?

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 & the amount of physical activity we do. Most people need between 4-10 hours of sleep per night. Waking up in the night is not unusual.

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 & 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

- Establish a routine of going to bed and getting up around the same time
- Try to make your surroundings conducive for sleep: e.g. temperature, noise & light levels, and comfortable mattress.
- Get into a pre sleep routine for around 40 minutes when you wind down & prepare for bed. Reading a book, having a bath, listening to relaxing music or a relaxation CD can help.
- Avoid tea and coffee after 5pm try herbal or milky drinks instead.
- If you can't sleep, don't watch the clock & 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 & 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.

See the Counselling and Wellbeing website for helpful online resources on Sleep: students.leeds.ac.uk/counsellingandwellbeing