

Treatment for sleep problems

- **Insomnia** – first, work out what is causing it, such as stress, alcohol, poor bedtime routine or one of the sleep conditions below. Cognitive behavioural therapy for insomnia can help change unhelpful thoughts and behaviours that affect sleep. Another approach, sleep restriction, limits the amount of time spent in bed.
- **Obstructive sleep apnoea** – treatment includes weight loss, cutting down on alcohol, the use of dental appliances such as mouthguards, and continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) machines.
- **Snoring** – losing weight, cutting down on alcohol and quitting smoking can help, as can sleeping on your side. There are special devices you can use in your nose or mouth to reduce snoring.
- **Sleep deprivation** – the main treatment is to increase total sleep time by addressing the cause of the sleep deprivation. Even if shift work is the cause, there are things you can do to reduce sleep deprivation.
- **Restless legs syndrome** – there are several medicines that can help.

Your healthcare provider can help you work out what's causing your sleep problem(s) and which treatments are best for you.



A note on sleeping medicines

Sleeping tablets or medicines are not used often because they can cause harm. Ongoing use can lead to developing a dependency on them, as well as an increased risk of falls, confusion, dementia and difficulties with driving.

Taking sleeping tablets for more than a few nights in a row can also make sleeping problems worse.

If you are taking sleeping medication regularly, ask your healthcare provider to help you stop. You may need to stop gradually over several weeks to months.



Your health is important



This information is sourced from the Healthify He Puna Waiora website, which offers easy to understand resources. **Healthify He Puna Waiora is brought to you by the Health Navigator Charitable Trust.**



COMMON SLEEP PROBLEMS

SLEEP HEALTH

Having trouble sleeping?



Get information on sleep at:
www.healthify.nz



What are common sleep problems?

Nearly everyone has trouble getting to sleep from time to time but, for some people, this can be a regular ongoing problem.

Not only can it make you feel tired, but it can really affect your day to day functioning and health. Learning how to manage sleep problems can greatly improve your quality of life.

Common sleep problems include:

Insomnia – you have trouble going to sleep or staying asleep for long enough.

Obstructive sleep apnoea – you stop breathing while you're asleep.

Snoring – you make a snorting or rattling noise when you breathe during sleep.

Sleep deprivation – you don't get enough sleep or enough good quality sleep, or you sleep at the wrong time (eg, daytime instead of night-time).

Restless legs syndrome – you have a really strong urge to move your legs.

How do I know if I have a sleep problem?



Adults need seven to nine hours of sleep a night.

You may have a sleep problem if you often:

- have trouble getting to sleep
- wake during the night and find it hard to go back to sleep
- wake too early
- don't feel refreshed when you wake
- have morning headaches
- sleep at the wrong time
- feel sleepy during the day
- feel irritable
- have poor concentration.



Not getting enough sleep, or getting poor-quality sleep, increases the risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity and diabetes. That means it is important to take steps to get good quality sleep.

Sleep tips



Set your body clock – go to bed and get up at the same time each day, including weekends.

Wind down at bedtime – have an hour of quiet time before bed: read, have a bath or listen to music.

Reduce blue light exposure in the evening – it disrupts your body clock, causing poor sleep. Don't use your phone or computer in the evening, or if you need to, switch it to night-time setting.

Avoid stimulants – within two to three hours of bedtime don't smoke, drink alcohol or caffeinated drinks, eat a heavy meal or do energetic exercise.

Make your bedroom suitable for sleep – keep it cool, dark and quiet and use it only for sleep and sex.

Avoid naps – don't sleep during the day but make your regular bed time earlier in the evening.

Be active in the day – take regular daytime exercise and get outside early to help set your body clock for a good night's sleep.

Get up if you can't sleep – if you can't sleep after 20 minutes or so, get up and do something boring but not screen-based. When you feel tired, try again. Don't lie in bed getting frustrated.

Use an app or tool – try an app, online sleep programme or the Te Kete Haerenga sleep toolkit. Visit www.healthify.nz for app reviews.