

Tips to improve your sleep

- ▶ Without a good night's sleep, it can be hard to function properly. Poor sleep can make you feel tired and grumpy. The good news is there are things you can do to improve your sleep by making a few changes to your daily routine and habits.

Here are some simple tips to help you sleep better at night:

Set your body clock

- Go to bed and get up at the same time each day, including weekends.
- Keep your daytime routine the same, even if you've had a poor night's sleep.
- Get out in bright light as soon as you wake up – light regulates your biological clock.



Wind down at bedtime

- Relax before going to bed; try reading, having a bath or listening to music.
- Make your bedroom dark, cool and quiet and ensure that your bed is comfortable.
- Don't go to bed hungry. Drinking a warm glass of milk before bed may be helpful.
- Avoid heavy meals within two hours of bedtime as this can interrupt sleep.

Keep your evenings stimulant-free

- Don't drink caffeine-containing drinks within six hours of going to bed.
- Avoid smoking and drinking alcohol two hours before going to bed.
- Avoid using your computer, mobile phone and other electronic devices for at least 30 minutes before going to bed.

Go to bed when you're tired

- If you go to bed at the same time each night, you should start to feel sleepy at bedtime.
- If you're awake after 20 minutes, get up and do something relaxing in another room.
- If you have things on your mind, write them down. Keep a pen and paper by your bed.



Be active in the day

- Regular daytime exercise improves sleep.
- Avoid strenuous exercise within 3 hours of going to bed.

i If you want to make some changes and think that some of these tips would help you get a better night's sleep then go to page "Sleep tips tracker" on page 44 and use the sleep tips tracker to help keep a record of the things you are doing.

Common sleeping problems are insomnia and obstructive sleep apnoea.

If you think your poor sleep is due to a sleep disorder, see your doctor for advice. There are treatments available.

Learn more at: www.hn.org.nz/health-living/sleep/

For more copies, visit www.hn.org.nz/takecharge

Relaxation is good for your health

- ▶ Being able to relax is vital for good health
- ▶ Life can get busy and we don't notice how tense or stressed we have become.

Are you relaxed? *Check now*

1 **SHOULDERS**
Are they up round your ears or relaxed?
Push them up and then let them fall down relaxed.

2 **FOREHEAD**
Is it creased and frowning?
Or smooth and relaxed?
Push your eyebrows up then let them fall into a relaxed position.

3 **JAWS**
Are your teeth clenched?
Let them come apart without opening your mouth.
Feel your jaw muscle.
Is it hard or relaxed?
Let it go.

4 **TONGUE**
Is it up against your front top teeth?
Let it lie on the floor of your mouth.



5 **HANDS**
Are they clenched like fists ready for a fight or floppy and relaxed?

6 **BREATHING**
Is it from your chest and rapid, or from your stomach and slow with full out breaths?

7 **TOES**
Are they curled up tight or relaxed?

Ways to relax

Some people relax by going for a walk or doing some gardening. Others relax by reading a book, listening to music, watching a movie or talking to friends.

What helps you to relax?

.....

.....

.....



Deep breathing

- ▶ Deep breathing, or breathing into your stomach, can make you feel better and help you to relax.
- ▶ This is also called diaphragmatic breathing.

Deep breathing technique



1

Lie on your back on a flat surface or in bed, with your knees bent and your head on a pillow.

You can also put a pillow under your knees to support your legs.

Place one hand on your upper chest and the other just below your rib cage. This will allow you to feel your diaphragm move as you breathe.

2

Breathe in slowly through your nose so that your stomach moves out against your hand.

The hand on your chest should remain as still as possible.

3

Tighten your stomach muscles, letting them fall inward as you breathe out, through lips like you are going to whistle.

The hand on your upper chest must stay as still as possible.

At first, practise this exercise 5–10 minutes, about 3–4 times per day. Gradually increase the amount of time you spend doing this exercise, and perhaps even increase the effort of the exercise by placing a book on your abdomen.

You may notice an increased effort will be needed to use the diaphragm correctly.

At first, you'll probably get tired while doing this exercise but keep at it, because with continued practice, diaphragmatic breathing will become easy and automatic.



Sleep tips tracker



To help you get a better night's sleep

Activity	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
No caffeine within 6 hours of going to bed							
No alcohol within 2 hours of going to bed							
No smoking within 2 hours of going to bed							
No heavy meals within 2 hours of going to bed							
Didn't go to bed hungry							
No physical exercise within 3 hours of going to bed							
Set a bedtime routine and went to bed on time							
Set a bedtime routine and woke up on time							
Didn't have a sleep/nap during the day							
Got out of bed when awake for more than 20 minutes							
Relaxed before bedtime							
Wrote down things on my mind and took pen and paper to bed							
No computer, mobile phones or other electronic device 30 minutes before going to bed							
Did some exercise during the day							
Rate 1..... 10 how good was your sleep							

Having difficulty sleeping? There are lots of things you can do to help get a better night's sleep. Use this form to record the changes you are making – remember the more changes you make, the more likely you are to get a good night's sleep. For more copies, visit www.hn.org.nz/takecharge