

# Sleep

## Information for patients

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People need an average of 7-8 hours of sleep for good health. Worry can make sleep problems worse. Without good sleep quality, we can become irritable, have difficulty concentrating and struggle in our day-to-day activities. This can develop into a vicious cycle. Without a good sleep we get stressed. This can lead to further sleep problems and disruption to our sleep patterns.

**This leaflet suggests some tips on improving sleep quality and routine.**

### Wind down in the hour before bed

Have a regular bedtime routine will help signal to your body that it's bedtime. For example:

- Relaxation exercises
- Having a bath
- Reading a book
- Putting out clothes for the next day
- Having a hot drink (caffeine free).

Try not to use smart phones or computers two hours before bedtime. The type of light given off by these devices can prevent sleep.

### Avoid stimulants

Try to avoid stimulants 4 to 6 hours before bedtime. These include coffee, tea, chocolate, cans of juice and nicotine. Although alcohol can make you feel relaxed in the short term, it actually reduces sleep quality.

### Fluids

Herbal teas and water can be a good substitute for caffeinated drinks. But don't drink too many fluids before bedtime as you're likely to end up needing the toilet!

### Regular wake time

No matter how much sleep you've had, set an alarm and get up at the same time each morning. This can be difficult but you'll benefit in the long run.

Try to get outdoors during the day. Exposure to natural light releases hormones that can help regulate our body clocks.

### Napping

However tired you may feel, try not to nap during the day. It disrupts your natural body clock and reduces the need for sleep at night. However, if you need a nap, 25 minutes or 2 hours is best. This fits with a normal sleep cycle.

## Learn to associate your bed with sleep

- Do not watch TV or use electronic devices in bed. Try to use your bed only for sleeping.
- If you haven't fallen asleep within 20 minutes or wake up and can't get back to sleep, get up and go to different room until you feel sleepy.
- Try reading a book or doing some relaxation exercises.

## Exercise

Regular exercise can improve sleep quality. Good options for evening exercise may include:

- Yoga
- Gentle swimming
- Walking.

**Your body will need some time to adapt to a change in sleeping habits. You will need to follow these tips for several weeks before you can reliably get to sleep easily.**

## Further Information

For some further information on sleeping tips:

### The Guardian – sleep information

<http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/series/the-good-sleep-handbook>



This leaflet was compiled by the East Lothian Physiotherapy Department, in association with the Patient Information Leaflet Group, NHS Lothian Physiotherapy Services.

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## It's OK to Ask

When you understand what's going on with your health, you can make better decisions around your care and treatment.

[www.nhsinform.scot/campaigns/its-ok-to-ask/](http://www.nhsinform.scot/campaigns/its-ok-to-ask/)

