



Sleeping Better

Practising the tips can result in a better night's sleep

Can't sleep: What do I do?



Difficulty going to sleep or waking up during the night is common

The tips in this newsletter may just make a difference. It is like learning to ride a bike or drive a car, it takes time. You may not see the benefit for a while. It doesn't mean that they don't work. However, if you don't practice them every time you go to bed, they will never work. If after a week, there isn't any improvement, talk to your Doctor or other Health Professional.

Before you go to bed

It is important that you prepare yourself for sleep. Going for a run or vacuuming the house just before you go to bed may make it less likely that you will go to sleep right away. Drinking alcohol before bed means that your sleep may not be as deep as it should be.

Instead: develop a relaxing routine such as:

- have a hot milk or camomile or valerian or other herbal tea
- read a book
- have a warm bath or shower
- listen to music.

Going to sleep

- Go to bed only when you feel sleepy. Try going to bed about the same time every night.
- Get up and go to another room if still awake after 20 minutes of trying to go to sleep.
- While awake, don't smoke or drink coffee. Don't do strenuous exercise or housework. Read a book, watch TV, build a model boat, do some craft or anything else that is quiet and relaxing.
- Go back to bed 60-90 minutes later and try to sleep again. Get up again if still awake 20 minutes later.



Remember no smoking or coffee.

Can't sleep: What do I do? (con't)

Next day

- Set the alarm for when you would normally get out of bed and get up at that time, no matter how much sleep you have had.
- Try not to have a day time nap.

You may not get very much sleep for the first couple of nights but your body will eventually get used to the routine.

Use the Sleep Record Sheet to track how things go over the next fortnight.

More hints

There is nothing more annoying than waking up at night and thinking about all the things that have happened during the day, especially the things that have gone wrong, or worrying about what might happen tomorrow.



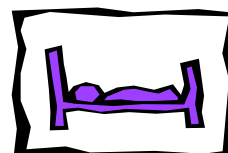
Go find your diary and write down the things that are bugging you. Remember, if you are still writing 20 minutes later, you will need to get out of bed and continue to write somewhere else.

Think up some positive coping self statements to help block out the negative thoughts. Be inventive. Write them into your diary so that you can remember them.

Can't think of your own - try these:

- I am here to go to sleep not to worry.
- My problems will still be there tomorrow so I will worry about them then.

(con't over the page).



More hints (con't)



Another useful way to stop the brain going over things is to keep saying to yourself the word "relax". Your brain will want to go back to what it was worrying about but you can eventually trick it into becoming relaxed.

If you find that you are going to bed early and waking up early, try spending time out in the sun in the late afternoon. You might like to go for a walk, weed the garden, chat to the neighbour over the back fence. Anything is okay as long as you spend at least 30 minutes outside.

This suggestion isn't just for the older person. If you are a shift worker, have jet lag, or have been ill, give it a go.



My Story

What I did to help me sleep



Many people find it difficult to go to sleep or to stay asleep. Two people shared their approach to sleeping better.

Nellie said that when she can't sleep she "*gets up and does various things*". At the moment, Nellie is making a patchwork blanket. She also said, "*finding things to do, that is the key I think. Get into hobbies, do some reading, do some exercise, have a nice long hot bath*".

Shaune found, "*that meditation is what has eased the pain in my left shoulder*", which helped her sleep better at night.



I just can't sleep



Ted is 80 years old. He lives by himself as his wife died 6 years ago. He was finding it extremely difficult to get a good night's sleep as he kept on thinking about everything he had to do.

His doctor referred him to a Psychiatrist, who prescribed Temaze[®] to help Ted sleep at night.

Unfortunately, the problems that led to Ted not sleeping were not even talked about.

Eventually, Ted was referred to the local Community Health Centre where he was assessed for Home Care Assistance and was encouraged to join the local Senior Citizens' group.

I don't know the outcome of Ted's story, but he was given the chance to talk about being on his own after the death of his wife and to find out what community assistance he was entitled to.



"Try Another Way" ©

Program

Produced by Jan Parr as part of a self-managed trial for cessation of benzodiazepine use. The finding of this study will be published in Drug and Alcohol Review in 2011.



