

Young Person's Guide to Coping with Sleep Difficulties

Young People need more sleep than adults to ensure healthy mental and physical development. Poor sleep can have a negative impact on our behaviour, mood, concentration and immune system. It is also linked to a greater risk of obesity. Sleep problems can include frequent nightmares, night terrors, difficulty getting to or staying asleep (insomnia) and sleep walking.



Statistics:

Research shows the majority of young people don't get enough good quality sleep. You are 3 times more likely to develop mental health problems if you are sleep deprived for a long period of time. (Sleep Scotland)

10 TOP TIPS for coping with sleep difficulties:

- 1 Know sleep recommendations.** 6-13 year olds should get 9-11 hours of sleep, while 14-17 year olds should get 8-10 hours of sleep per night (National Sleep Foundation).
- 2 Make the bedroom sleep friendly.** For good quality sleep, the bedroom should be clean, comfortable, free from distractions and dark. Ideal room temperature is 18-24°C.
- 3 Maintain health and wellbeing.** Good nutrition and regular exercise improve sleep. Avoid caffeine, sugar, alcohol and large meals before bedtime.
- 4 Establish a consistent routine.** Try to go to bed and get up at similar times each day. Avoid day time napping or long lie-ins at the weekend.
- 5 Keep bedtimes a screen-free zone.** Avoid using screens one hour before bedtime. Blue light from screens reduces sleep hormones, it is also linked to poorer sleep quality and increased tiredness.
- 6 Relax before bed.** Try to wind down before bedtime. This might include a warm bath, reading a book, listening to calm music or mindfulness activities.
- 7 File worries away.** Try to unclutter thoughts and worries before bedtime. For example, write down worries or make a 'to do' list for the next day.
- 8 Can't sleep? Get up.** Advice is to get up and do something relaxing (not screens!) until you feel sleepy again, then go back to bed.
- 9 Keep a sleep diary.** If sleep is a problem, completing a sleep diary over a two week period can help to identify what's keeping you awake.
- 10 Look after yourself.** If you are concerned seek additional help, try to talk to your family, GP and/or school.

Self-help links:

- www.sleepscotland.org
- www.sleepcouncil.org.uk
- www.sleepfoundation.org

