

# Positive sleep strategies



Getting the right quality and quantity of sleep is vital to achieving optimal health and wellbeing. Sleep is an essential function that enables our body and mind to rest and recharge, ensuring we're refreshed and alert when we wake up.

## Benefits of better sleep

- 1 Reduced risk of weight gain and poor eating decisions
- 2 Stronger immune system
- 3 Improved memory and decision making
- 4 More energy to enjoy life
- 5 Improved concentration, alertness, and response time
- 6 Reduced risk of heart disease and stroke
- 7 Improved social and emotional intelligence
- 8 Greater creativity

Sleep plays a key role in keeping us both physically and mentally healthy, but work schedules, day-to-day stressors, travel, medical conditions or shift work can present challenges to getting enough sleep.

Healthy adults need between 7-9 hours of sleep a night, every night. Concerningly, more than 30% of adults have poor sleep patterns that lead to fatigue and irritability. Those that regularly sleep less than five hours each night are at greater risk of longer-term mental health issues.

A healthy diet, regular exercise and positive lifestyle habits all contribute to better sleep. In addition, you can take a number of actions to ensure you're setting yourself up to sleep well.

## Do's and don'ts of sleep

Do...	Don't...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day</b> – even on weekends</li> <li>• <b>Create a comfortable sleeping environment</b> – keep the room cool, quiet, and dark with comfortable bedding</li> <li>• <b>Use your bed only for sleep and intimacy</b> – avoid eating, studying, or using technology</li> <li>• <b>Use an alarm clock if you need one</b> – it's a better solution than keeping a mobile phone by your bed</li> <li>• <b>Exercise during the day</b> – it will help you to wind down more easily in the evening</li> <li>• <b>Spend time in natural light during the day</b> – this promotes melatonin production that helps your body know when to sleep and when to wake up</li> <li>• <b>Use relaxation techniques before bed</b> – take a warm shower, do some breathing exercises, or read a book to help you unwind</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Exercise within two hours of going to bed</b> – exercise stimulates your body and can make it difficult to fall asleep</li> <li>• <b>Consume caffeinated drinks in the evening</b> – avoid coffee, tea, and other caffeine</li> <li>• <b>Drink alcohol before bed</b> – alcohol may cause a number of sleep issues for you</li> <li>• <b>Eat a heavy or spicy meal before going to bed</b> – try to allow sufficient time to digest your meal</li> <li>• <b>Go to bed hungry</b> – have a light snack if you need to</li> <li>• <b>Engage in stimulating activity right before bed</b> – avoid playing competitive games, paying bills, having difficult conversations or anything else that might keep your brain awake</li> <li>• <b>Nap during the day</b> – or keep it to no more than 30 minutes so as to not disrupt your sleep</li> </ul>

## Technology and sleep

Last, but most definitely not least, when it comes to sleeping well, technology is not your friend! While mobiles, tablets, computers, and other devices have become an important, if not essential, part of our daily life, they can have a negative effect on our sleep. The blue light emitted by the screens can stop our brain producing melatonin which assists with sleep. Try to have at least a 30 minute gadget-free period before heading to bed.

Invest a little time now to audit your sleep routine and put some positive changes in place – you won't regret it!