

Sleep hygiene

Explanation: It really is true that we feel better about things when we get enough sleep. This is because while we are asleep the body and mind are still busy with physical repair and emotional processing. Sleep helps us sort things out and resets both body and mind. We all need good sleep to help us manage the ups and downs of everyday life but sometimes our sleep can be interrupted. Stress and worry can affect our sleep, and young people are even more disadvantaged because their bodies want to sleep when society expects them to be awake and at school! There are lots of different things we can do to help promote good sleep – you don't have to do all of these, but if you are having trouble sleeping it's worth trying some of them and seeing what works for you.

How to do it:

- Try to keep to a routine – keep your bedtimes and getting up times reasonably stable as this encourages the brain to be ready for both sleeping and waking up.
- A pre-bed routine also helps the brain to recognise that it's time for sleep. Things like –
 - Reading or music for around ten minutes before lights out.
 - A hot bath or shower.
 - A warm milky drink.
 - Turning off any screens at least an hour before lights out.
 - Audio books – so long as you can turn them off or set them only for a short time.
- Keep your bedroom temperature cool as the body needs to lower its core temperature to sleep.
- Avoid caffeine or energy drinks after 2pm – especially important if you feel anxious as caffeine mimics the anxiety response so can make you feel worse.
- Try to have a quick tidy in your bedroom before you prepare for sleep as this will help your brain put thoughts from the day aside.
- Keep a pad and pen by your bed to record worries so you can dismiss them until the next day.
- When you get up, open the curtains and get lots of light – morning light helps keep us awake when we need to be and regulates the sleep rhythms.
- White noise can help sleep, whether it's a fan or the sound of a rainforest.
- Exercise during the day will help make you physically tired and also burns cortisol (the stress hormone).
- Healthy eating and not eating anything very rich or sugary before bed can also make a difference.

When it's useful: If you are having trouble sleeping or feeling tired during the day then it can be helpful to look at your sleep routines. Often just small tweaks can make a really big difference.

