

General tips for sleeping better (often called sleep hygiene)

The following are commonly advised to help promote sleep and are often all that is necessary:

- **Reduce caffeine** - do not have any food, medicines, or drinks that contain caffeine or other stimulants for six hours before bedtime (see above). Some people have found that cutting out caffeine completely through the entire day has helped.
- **Do not smoke** within six hours before bedtime.
- **Do not drink alcohol** within six hours before bedtime.
- **Do not have a heavy meal** just before bedtime (although a light snack may be helpful).
- **Do not do any strenuous exercise within four hours of bedtime** (but exercising earlier in the day is helpful).
- **Body rhythms** - try to get into a routine of wakefulness during the day, and sleepiness at night. The body becomes used to rhythms or routines. If you keep to a pattern, you are more likely to sleep well. Therefore:
 - No matter how tired you are, do not sleep or nap during the day.
 - It is best to go to bed only when sleepy-tired in the late evening.
 - Switch the light out as soon as you get into bed.
 - Always get up at the same time each day, seven days a week, however short the time asleep. Use an alarm to help with this. Resist the temptation to lie in - even after a poor night's sleep. Do not use weekends to catch up on sleep, as this may upset the natural body rhythm that you have got used to in the week.
- **The bedroom** should be a quiet, relaxing place to sleep:
 - It should not be too hot, cold, or noisy.
 - Earplugs and eye shades may be useful if you are sleeping with a snoring or wakeful partner.
 - Make sure the bedroom is dark with good curtains to stop early morning sunlight.
 - Don't use the bedroom for activities such as work, eating or television.
 - Consider changing your bed if it is old, or not comfortable.
 - Hide your alarm clock under your bed. Many people will clock watch and this does not help you to get off to sleep.
- **Mood and atmosphere** - try to relax and wind down with a routine before going to bed. For example:
 - A stroll followed by a bath, some reading, and a warm drink (without caffeine) may be relaxing in the late evening.
 - Do not do anything that is mentally demanding within 90 minutes of going to bed - such as studying.
 - Go to bed when sleepy-tired.
 - Some people find playing soft music is helpful at bedtime. Try a player with a time switch that turns the music off after about 30 minutes.
- **If you cannot get off to sleep after 20-30 minutes** - then get up. If you can, go into another room, and do something else such as reading or watching TV rather than brooding in bed. Go back to bed when sleepy. You can repeat this as often as necessary until you are asleep.