



Fatigue Reduction: Sleep

Why is sleep important?

Our brains are very active during sleep, switching between periods of high activity, called REM (rapid eye movement) sleep and periods of quiet activity, known as NREM (non-rapid eye movement) sleep

- During the first half of a block of sleep we get more NREM sleep. This is when we are most likely to get the deeper stages of sleep. This type of sleep is **important for memory consolidation**: our brains are working hard, moving memories from short term storage into long term storage, freeing up more short term memory space for the next day.
- During the second half of the block of sleep we get more REM sleep. REM sleep is **important for emotional processing**, which explains why people can become a bit tearful and prone to emotional outbursts when they have gone without sleep.
- Our ability to think and use language, use reason and judgement, make complex decisions, control our mood and assess risk are all affected by the impact fatigue has on our brain. This is why fatigued people are poor communicators, tend to be irritable and quick tempered, take more risks and make poor decisions.
- Forbidden zones for sleep are times of the day when alertness is naturally very high. Around 9am and 8pm it may be difficult to get to sleep and stay asleep.

Did you know...

Making sure you get enough sleep will:

- Increase your energy levels
- Make you more productive.
- Boost your immune system
- Heighten brain function.
- Help you regulate your mood





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Tips for better sleep

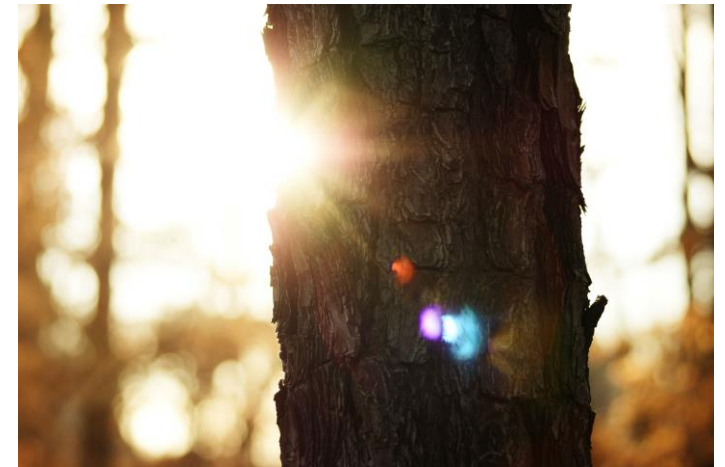
You can't make yourself fall asleep, but you can put things in place to give yourself the best chance.

During the day you can prepare for a good night's sleep by:

- Spending time in natural light; it has positive effects on circadian rhythm, no matter how brightly the sun is shining.
- Taking regular exercise (including walking). It has numerous health benefits, including for sleep.
- Limit alcohol and caffeine, especially close to bedtime. It can disrupt the quantity and quality of your sleep.
- Create an association in your mind between your bed and sleep; try to avoid working in your bedroom.
- Avoiding naps lasting longer than 30 minutes after 3pm (unless you're a night worker).
- Set aside 20 minutes during the day to write down your worries and problem-solve.

Bedtime preparation could include:

- Avoid going to bed hungry or straight after a heavy meal.
- Stick to a regular routine; go to bed (and get up) at the same time each day where possible.
- Taking a warm bath or shower before bed. This lowers your core temperature, making it easier to get to sleep.
- Keep your bedroom cool, quiet and as dark as possible.
- Create an association in your mind between your bed and sleep. Try to avoid working in your bedroom.
- Cue your body to slow down and relax by preparing for bed the same way each night and go to bed when you are sleepy.





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Trouble sleeping

If you find it hard to drop off to sleep, or wake up in the night some of these techniques might help.

- Try conditioning yourself to fall asleep to guided imagery, using pre-recorded audio programs with soothing music and voiceovers.
- You could try to follow a relaxation routine; performing deep breathing or backwards counting exercises in bed can help.
- Visualize being in your favourite place.
- Try to recall a long list, like all of the states of the U.S.A.
- If you took time to note down worries/problem solve in the day, at night try to concentrate on the positive things; gratitude lists can be helpful.
- Don't spend more than 20 minutes tossing and turning. Instead, get out of bed and do something relaxing in very low light.
- Try not to look at your phone as light from the screen can have an alerting effect.

Try out different relaxation strategies to see which one works for you. Some swear by meditation, while singing works for others.

If you think you might be experiencing insomnia, book an appointment with your GP, and [take a look at the NHS website](#) for advice. Remember, you should only use sleeping aids as prescribed by your doctor, and only as a temporary way to break the cycle of sleeplessness.

