



How to Sleep Well during the COVID-19 pandemic

Welcome to this week's discussion.

This week we're focusing on how the COVID-19 pandemic might be affecting our sleep.

The novel coronavirus (also known as COVID-19) has brought the world into uncharted waters.

With such huge changes to the way we live and work, it's understandable that good sleep habits might fall by the wayside. However, as we learn to adjust to the situation, it's important to re-focus on sleeping well to keep ourselves healthy.

Sleep is critical to physical health and effective functioning of the immune system. It's also important to our mental health; being well rested makes it easier to manage stressful situations.

Whether you had sleeping problems before COVID-19 or they've only come on recently, there are concrete steps you can take to improve your sleep during this pandemic.

Getting plenty of sleep will help you regulate your mood, improve your brain function, increase your energy levels and make you more productive.

Are we more vulnerable to sleep issues during COVID-19?

Yes, for several reasons:

- Many of us are constantly looking at news and social media sites. When we look at these late at night, the blue light from our screens reduces the amount of melatonin our brains produce. This is our sleep hormone and too little of it makes it harder to fall asleep.
- Elevated stress and an overload of information can keep the mind racing, triggering insomnia.
- Loss of daytime structure can upset night time sleep schedules. Inconsistent bedtimes and wake times make it hard to judge when you need to go to sleep.
- Depressed mood, more downtime and low energy can increase long napping, making it harder to fall asleep at night.

While sleep is important, try not to fret about it! Worrying about sleep just turns into more stress. Just do your best to get to bed at a regular time and follow these tips if you need to.

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



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Things that can aid better sleep.

- Tempted to sleep in? Resist if you can. Get up and go to bed at the same time each day.
- Uncertainty can trigger anxiety and stress. Limit the time you spend checking news and social media.
- Set aside 20 minutes during the day to write down your worries and problem-solve. At night try to concentrate on the positive things.
- Trying out different relaxation strategies to see which one works for you. Some swear by meditation, while singing works for others.
- Create an association in your mind between your bed and sleep. Experts recommend that sleep and sex should be the only activities that take place there. Try to avoid working in your bedroom.
- Spend time in natural light. Even if that's just sat by an open window. Natural light has positive effects on circadian rhythm, no matter how brightly the sun is shining.
- Regular exercise (including walking) has numerous important benefits, including for sleep.

The Science.

- Getting a sufficient amount of good-quality sleep helps keep your body and mind healthy.
- Sleep can boost your immune system and improve your mood.
- Sleep heightens brain function. Our mind works better when we get good sleep, contributing to complex thinking, learning, memory, and decision-making.
- Alcohol and caffeine, especially later in the day, can disrupt the quantity and quality of your sleep.
- Deep breathing helps your body and mind relax. By taking a deep inhalation and holding your breath, you're increasing your body's oxygen level, allowing your body to have to work slightly less hard.
- Kindness and connection (even over the phone) can reduce stress and its harmful effects on mood and sleep.
- Don't spend more than 20 minutes tossing and turning. Instead, get out of bed and do something relaxing in very low light

Discuss in your teams:

- Are you experiencing difficulties sleeping? Do you know any of your colleagues who are?
- If you considered a work colleague was not themselves and possibly fatigued, would you raise it? Do you know how you would raise it?
- What can you or your family do differently to ensure a better nights sleep?
- Think about and discuss all of the things that you and your teams can do and how we can all care for ourselves and each other.