

Understanding sleep, and how to improve it for your wellbeing

Physiotherapy Department

Information for Patients

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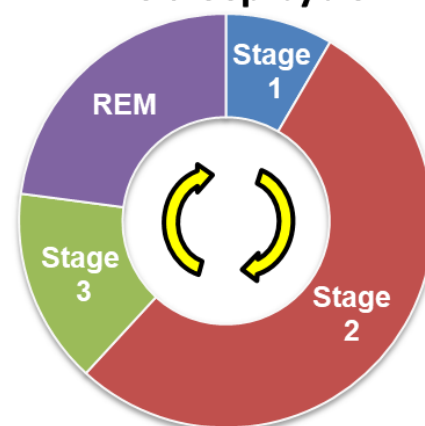
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Sleep is the foundation of your health. Both the quantity and quality of sleep are important to let your body and mind work well. It is recommended that we get 7 to 9 hours of sleep a night. The current UK average is 6 hours and 30 minutes.

Good sleep can lead to many benefits like:

- Boost your mood
- Improve your immune system
- Help to reduce pain levels
- Help with weight loss. It will help you lose more fat than muscle.
- Increase motivation for activity/exercise
- Reduces the chances of long term health conditions

The Sleep Cycle



The sleep cycle (see diagram above)

There are 4 stages within a sleep cycle.

Normally we will go through 4 to 6 cycles of these stages a night. How long each stage is can change in each cycle. If you wake up often in the light sleep stages, you may not reach the deep sleep stages. This can be bad for your physical and mental health.

- 1) **Falling asleep** lasts 1 to 7 minutes. You can be easily woken at this point.
- 2) **Light sleep** lasts 10 to 25 minutes. Your muscles are relaxed, breathing and heart rate slow.
- 3) **Deep sleep** lasts 20 to 40 minutes. This stage is critical for body recovery & boosting your immune system.
- 4) **Rapid eye movement (REM)** lasts 10 to 60 minutes. This when brain activity is increased. You dream in this stage. This stage is important to sort out the events of your day in your memory. This is important for learning and creativity.

Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice

Visit www.uhleicester.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net

What can affect my sleep?

Light and temperature:

- Getting too much or too little light in the day can upset your internal body clock (circadian rhythm). This can be screen time close to bedtime or not getting outdoors during the daytime.
- Make sure your bedroom is not too warm. 18 degrees is ideal.

Bedtime routine (make sleep an important part of your day):

- Going to bed at the same time each day.
- Trying to relax before bed
- Let yourself have enough time to sleep.

Beliefs and behaviours:

- Some people think that sleeping means to be lazy so they try to sleep less. Not getting enough sleep is bad for your health, even if you feel okay.
- If you eat, watch TV or work in bed, your brain links these activities to being in bed, instead of the bed being a place where you sleep. This can make it harder to fall asleep.
- Continuing to lie in bed awake for more than 30 minutes can also disrupt this link.

Caffeine:

- Caffeine gives you energy. It is found in coffee, tea, energy drinks, chocolate.
- Caffeine stays in your body for many hours. Your midday coffee is still affecting your brain at midnight!
- Caffeine can reduce the amount of good sleep and REM cycles. This is bad for your health.

Alcohol:

- Alcohol has a sedative effect. This means you will not go through your normal sleep cycles. Alcohol disrupts REM sleep.

Mental health:

- Anxiety, stress, depression and overthinking can make your brain produce chemicals that make it hard for you to sleep.

What can happen if I do not sleep well?

- It is harder to think and make decisions.
- It is bad for your mood and mental health.
- It is harder to deal with your emotions, like anxiety.
- Your blood sugar levels can be less controlled.
- You are more likely to eat too much. This is because the hormone telling us when we are full does not work so well.
- Pain is worse and we do not manage it as well. There is an increased chance of pain flare ups.
- You may get ill more often because your immune system is less strong.



- Increased risk of getting long term health conditions and not living as long. This includes heart disease, cancer, diabetes, depression, lasting pain, obesity, and fibromyalgia.

How can I improve my sleep?

- **Make time for sleep:** Sleep is just as important for your health as is eating well and exercising. Try to get 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night. Go to bed early enough so you can get up on time. Remember, it can take 20 to 30 minutes to fall asleep after you get into bed.
- **Reduce caffeine intake:** Try not to drink caffeinated drinks after midday. Or try switching to decaffeinated drinks instead.
- **Reduce alcohol intake:** Try not to drink too much on any day. Follow the NHS guidelines for recommended alcohol intake for adults. The more alcohol that you drink the greater the sedative effect, the poorer your sleep quality. Visit: www.nhs.uk/better-health/drink-less/
- **Increase physical activity:** Being physically tired from the days activity helps to improve sleep quality. Physical activity also lowers stress and anxiety. This makes it easier to relax and fall asleep.
- **Get more daylight:** Light helps control your body clock. It tells you when to sleep and wake up. If you get too much or too little light, it can make it hard to sleep. Try to get some sunlight in the morning after you wake up. At night, make your bedroom dark. Try to stop using screens like phones or tablets 1 hour before bed. The blue light from screens can make it harder to fall asleep.
- **Eat a healthy balanced diet:** Eating a balanced diet helps keep your blood sugar steady. This can stop you from having sugar ‘crashes’ that make you feel sleepy during the day. If you nap for too long in the day, it can be harder to sleep at night.
- **Set a regular routine:** Try to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even on weekends. This helps your body know when it’s time to sleep. Taking a warm shower before bed and sleeping in a cool room can help you relax and fall asleep. Before bed, do something calm like reading, listening to music, or meditating. Try not to use screens like phones or tablets before bed.
- **Train your brain:** Teach your brain that bed is for sleeping. It is normal to wake up in the night, but if you are awake for more than 15 minutes, and it goes past 30 minutes, get out of bed and do something quiet until you feel sleepy again. Try not to eat or use screens like phones or tablets. Remember not to eat, watch TV, or do homework in bed, because this makes your brain think bed is for other things, not just sleep.
- **Address health problems:** For example, health conditions such as menopause can have a big impact on your sleep if not under control. Try visiting your GP to talk about your options.

There is an example of a sleep checklist that you could use to help to improve your sleep on page 5 of this leaflet.

It may take time to see improvements in your sleep. Research shows that increasing your sleep time by just 15 minutes can be beneficial to your health and wellbeing. Even if you are unable to increase the time spent asleep, these steps can lead to better quality sleep. This is just as important.



More information:

The Sleep Charity: <https://thesleepcharity.org.uk/>

The Sleep Foundation: www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-topics

Social Prescribing: www.leicesterterrace.co.uk/social-prescribing

Mind Charity: www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/sleep-problems/useful-contacts/

NHS Better Health:

- www.nhs.uk/better-health/
- www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-wellbeing-tips/how-to-fall-asleep-faster-and-sleep-better/

Podcasts:

- Get better sleep: <https://drchatterjee.com/why-sleep-is-the-most-important-pillar-of-health-with-professor-matthew-walker-re-release/>
- Sleep more live more: <https://drchatterjee.com/how-to-improve-your-sleep-and-why-you-should-with-professor-matthew-walker/>

Books

- Why We Sleep by Matthew Walker

Apps

- Pzizz: <https://pzizz.com/>

Contact details:

Glenfield Hospital Physiotherapy Department: **0116 258 3595**

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل
જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।
Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email uhl-tr.equalitymailbox@nhs.net

Example sleep checklist

Sleep hygiene category	Good Sleeping Habits	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Timing	Set a constant bedtime.							
	Set a constant wake up time.							
	Do not nap, or keep it less than 30 minutes.							
Sleep behaviour	Have a routine before bedtime.							
	Use bedroom only for sleep.							
	Get out of bed if unable to sleep after 30 minutes.							
Environment	Take a warm bath.							
	Keep temperature of the room cool.							
	Keep bedroom dark.							
	No screens for one hour before bed.							
Food /drink	Avoid caffeine after midday.							
	Avoid nicotine or alcohol before bedtime.							
	If eating before bed, light snack only.							
Emotions	Avoid overstimulation. Do mentally light tasks.							
	Use relaxation techniques.							