

My Sleep Strategies

This activity sheet contains a number of exercises and tips for you to use when ready. You are welcome to save and print these as a collection or simply print individual exercises as needed.

What is going on with my Sleep?

What is your experience of sleep when drinking? Select some of the things that apply to you.

- I use alcohol to get to sleep
- I use alcohol to relax and then I fall asleep as a bonus
- When I drink, I often wake up in the early hours of the morning.
- I wake up to go to the toilet after drinking
- Drinking tends to make me feel less rested
- Other:

Have you noticed any changes to your sleep when you drink?

(e.g. changes to your health like breathing, anxiety attacks at night, getting up to go to the toilet, any feelings you experience the next day)

We are all different, and for some people problems sleeping can impact them in different ways.

How would you describe yourself when you are *poorly rested*, tired?

What are some of the things you notice when you are getting enough sleep or are *well rested*?

Is there anything you are concerned about regarding your sleep?

- Not being able to get to sleep without alcohol
- Not being able to stay asleep without alcohol
- Not being able to relax enough to sleep
- Other:

Sleep Hygiene

One of the most widely used and effective strategies for sleep issues is something called Sleep Hygiene. Sleep Hygiene is a collection of strategies that are proven to help us to get ready to go to sleep in a calm and relaxed way.

Everyone will have different strategies that work for them. You will find that some work better for you than others.

- ❑ **Have a regular sleep time**

If we can make sure that we go to bed and get up at roughly the same time each day, this can help us to get into a predictable sleep cycle.

- ❑ **Avoid caffeine and nicotine**

These are stimulants and will interfere with your body's natural signs that it needs to sleep.

- ❑ **Bed is for sleeping!**

Try to keep your bed specifically for sleep-related activities - doing work while in bed can lead to associations between bed and stress.

- ❑ **Limit naps**

As much as you might like a nap during the day, if you are having issues sleeping in the evening, it might be necessary to cut out daytime napping, so you are tired in the evening.

- ❑ **Sleep rituals**

- ❑ **Eat well**

Eating rich or sugary foods near bedtime is likely to impact the quality of your sleep, since your body will be digesting food as you go to sleep. Eating earlier in the evening can mean that your sleep is less disrupted and more peaceful.

- ❑ **Dim the lights**

Ensuring that your environment is free of bright light in the 3 hrs before bed means that your body will start producing the sleep hormone melatonin, which is responsible for sleepiness. Bright lights and screens will interfere with the production of melatonin, and trick your brain into thinking that it is daytime.

- ❑ **Temperature Control**

A hot shower before bed lowers your core body temperature, which helps you to get to sleep and can be a relaxing ritual.

- ❑ **Blackout**

Our brains can register even a little bit of light, so it might be useful to invest in a sleep mask that can block any light that is coming in. This is also useful in the morning if you are woken up by the sun.

❑ **Sleep Diary**

Keeping track of your sleep (time you go to bed, disturbances, hours of sleep per night), as well as what you were doing each day, will likely help you to understand a bit more about your sleep cycle. Using apps on your phone that measure sleep and sleep cycles can be useful as well in becoming more aware of your sleeping patterns.

Tips for a better night's sleep			
Strategy	Why?	Potential challenges	Solutions
Get up at the same time every day (and no more than 1 hour later when you are 'sleeping in')	Your body gets used to waking up at the same time and this will help your body's natural clock to regulate itself	Sleep through your alarm Feeling too tired to get up	Set multiple alarms Get someone you live with to wake you up Get up as soon as you wake up, even if you feel you haven't had enough sleep. When you get up, open the curtains immediately to let natural light in <i>Give yourself time to get into this routine. It will get easier!</i>
Go to bed at the same time every day	Your body gets used to going to sleep at the same time and this will help your body's natural clock to regulate itself	Not feeling tired	Relaxation exercises, gentle stretching, milky drink or chamomile tea, hot bath 30 mins before bedtime

<p>Don't nap during the day</p>	<p>Napping will throw off your body's natural clock and make it more difficult to sleep at night</p>	<p>Feeling very tired during day</p>	<p>Go for a gentle walk instead.</p> <p>Limit nap time to 30mins, as early in the day as possible</p>
<p>Limit caffeine, alcohol and nicotine 4-6hrs before bedtime</p>	<p>Caffeine can stay in your system for up to 8hrs. Although alcohol can initially act as a sedative, it interrupts normal sleep patterns. Nicotine is a stimulant, making it difficult to fall asleep and stay asleep</p>	<p>Using stimulants because you feel tired during the day</p>	<p>If you use these substances, commit to a cut-off time as early as possible during the day to take them</p> <p>Have herbal tea instead of caffeine in the afternoon, this can help make you more alert</p> <p>Try some alcohol free days each week</p>
<p>Expose yourself to bright light/sunlight soon after awakening</p>	<p>This will help to regulate your body's natural clock. Try and keep your bedroom dark while you are sleeping so that the light doesn't interfere with your rest</p>		<p>Try and get outside into sunlight and do some physical activity (the body clock is particularly sensitive to light and exercise)</p>
<p>Exercise earlier during the day</p>	<p>Exercise is very important for good sleep, but be sure to exercise in the morning or early afternoon. Exercise stimulates the body and aerobic activity before bedtime may make falling asleep more difficult</p>		

Developing a Sleep Plan

As they say - knowledge is power! Now that you know about some of the things that are messing up your sleep, as well as the role that alcohol is playing for you, let's put some of this knowledge into a plan of action.

The Sleep Hygiene strategies I'm going to try are:

The Sleep Rituals I am going to incorporate into my routine are:

As you try these out in the next couple of weeks, **make sure you keep track of what works and what doesn't**. Some great strategies might be most effective in certain situations (e.g. mindfulness before bed when stressed), others will be great to use every evening (e.g. hot shower before bed, sleeping mask).

If doing any of these exercises brings up tough stuff for you, please talk to a trusted family member, friend, GP or one of the services there to support you. You can find some of these contacts on our Get Help page. For additional support, we encourage you to follow the recommendations provided to you in your Personal Snapshot Report.