

SLEEP AND HEALTH

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WayAhead

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**“Sleeplessness
is a desert
without
vegetation or
inhabitants.”**

Jessamyn West

Sleep

During sleep we repair our physical and mental health. Good sleep helps us resolve some of our daily problems. It helps us with finding new ideas for creative projects. Good sleep also help us cope with stress and other illnesses. When we don't sleep well, it can become a health problem.

What stops us from sleeping well?

There are many reasons preventing us from having a good night sleep. These reasons might be:

- Stress and worries – Often we think about our problems in bed over and over again, which makes it difficult to fall asleep.
- Changes in diet or a very poor diet - Going to bed hungry or eating too much before bed can also make it difficult to fall asleep. Make sure you eat full diet, including fresh fruit and vegetables and drink enough water.
- Shift work – If you do shift work, make sure the room is quiet and dark and that no one disturbs your sleep.
- Poor sleep setting – Sleeping on the couch in front of the TV is not a good sleeping arrangement.
- Sleep disorders – It might take years before a sleep disorder is diagnosed.

How can a good sleep improve my life?

There are many benefits of having a good night sleep. The following are some of the ways a good night sleep can benefit your life.

- Lower risk of some diseases – a good night sleep could protect us from developing cancer, heart disease, diabetes and obesity.
- Less accidents
- Improved memory - people who sleep well and are better able to learn and remember new things.
- Less pains and headaches
- Better sex life

The Good Sleep Guide

During the evening

- Daily exercise helps us fall asleep at night. Try to do some walking, swimming or other light exercise
- A hot milky drink is very effective to fall asleep. Drinking alcohol, coffee, tea or chocolate at night is not recommended.
- It might take time to get ready for sleep. Try having a warm bath or listening to some calm music. Avoid to do anything that is mentally stimulating within 1-2 hours of bedtime.
- Keep all sleep for bed time - don't sleep in the armchair as it upset your sleeping patterns.
- Try to put the day to rest. Write down all your worries in a notebook and say goodbye to them before going to bed. You can deal with them more effectively in the morning.
- Make sure bed and bedroom are comfortable.

At bedtime

- Try to go to bed and to get up at the same time every day
- Keep your bedroom only for rest and sleeping. Leave reading, watching TV and computer activities for another room.
- Put the lights out.
- Allow yourself to relax. Enjoy falling asleep. Let sleep find you.

If you have problems getting to sleep:

Sleep difficulties are quite common and not as damaging as you might think.

- Try not to get upset, frustrated or think about the next day.
- If you are awake for more than 15 minutes, you just might not be ready for sleep. Try to go into another room.
- Do something relaxing while you are up, like listening music or reading.
- Go back to bed again when feel 'sleepy tired'. You may have to repeat this rising and returning to bed several times a night at first.

* A good sleeping pattern may take a number of weeks to establish.

Do I need to see a doctor?

If you haven't been able to sleep well over a long period of time, you may benefit from seeing a doctor. Your GP might refer you to a psychologist specialising in sleep disorders.



Where do I go for help?

The WayAhead Directory

is an online resource providing a comprehensive list of mental health related services in NSW.

www.WayAhead.org.au

Phone Lines

WayAhead Mental Health Information Line

1300 794 991

Call your local doctor (GP)

Australian Psychological Society
1800 22 4636

Sleep Centres Australia
02 9252 6144

Sleep Services Australia
1300 867 533



Translating & Interpreting Service
(TIS) 131 450

Please call the Mental Health Information Line through the Telephone Interpreter Service (TIS). Free to Australian citizens or permanent residents.

Useful Websites

Australian Psychological Society
www.psychology.org.au

Sleep Centres of Australia
www.sleepcentres.com.au/obstructive-sleep-apnea.html

Sleep Health Foundation
www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au

Australasian Sleep Association
www.sleep.org.au

Sleep Services Australia
www.sleepservicesaustralia.com.au

Sleep Medicine at The Children's Hospital at Westmead
www.schn.health.nsw.gov.au/parents-and-carers/our-services/sleep-medicine/chw

Transcultural Mental Health
www.dhi.health.nsw.gov.au/tmhc/default.aspx

Disclaimer

This information is for educational purposes. As neither brochures nor websites can diagnose people it is always important to obtain professional advice and/or help when needed.

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The Association encourages feedback and welcomes comments about the information provided.

This fact sheet was last reviewed by Vassilka Dimitrova-Isbell, 2016

**“ I found people who
understood exactly what I
was going through ”**



