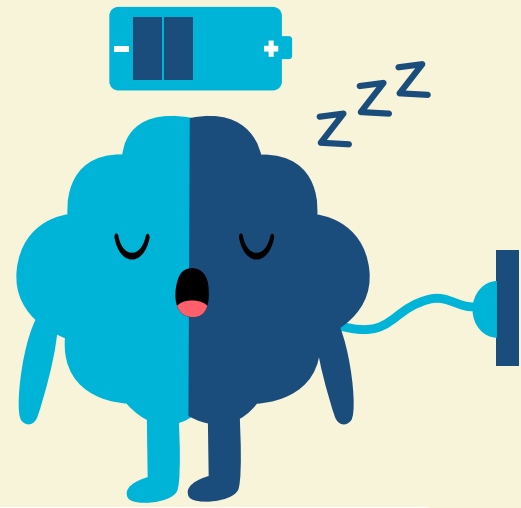


SLEEP



What is sleep?

Sleep is a special time when your body and brain take a break to rest and recharge. While you sleep, your brain sorts through everything you have learned during the day, and your body gets busy growing, healing, and staying healthy.

It's like pressing the reset button so you can wake up feeling fresh, focused, and full of energy!

Why is sleep important?

Being a young person can feel like a lot sometimes. Between school, friends, figuring out who you are, and thinking about what's next, your brain can feel like it's doing overtime.

If you add in scrolling through social media, gaming, or watching stuff online, it's no wonder your brain feels full sometimes.

When life gets busy or stressful, it can affect your mood and make you feel anxious. What is the first thing to be impacted on? Your sleep.

Struggling to fall asleep or not getting enough rest can leave you feeling drained, moody, and make it harder to focus. It can impact how you feel emotionally.

Getting good sleep isn't just about not being tired, it's about giving your brain the break it needs to stay strong, sharp, and mentally healthy.



How do I know if I have bad sleep habits?

Use 'Check list for sleepy teens'

Sleep action - <https://sleepaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Checklist-for-Sleepy-Teens.pdf>

What disrupts your sleep?

Sleep difficulties can sneak up on us for lots of reasons. Here's what might be getting in the way of a good night's rest:

Diet

Eating at random times can confuse your body about when it's supposed to relax. Things like sugar or caffeine (yep, that includes chocolate, fizzy drinks, tea, and coffee) can keep your brain buzzing, especially if you have them in the evening.

School & Social Pressure

Homework, tests, clubs and other school related tasks and worries can play on your mind outside of the school day. Then, there's the pressure to stay in the loop with friends. Late-night group chats or scrolling through social media can keep you up much later than planned.

Anxiety & Overthinking

Worries about school, relationships, or even not being able to sleep can make your brain go into overdrive. That stress releases cortisol (a stress hormone), which basically tells your body not to relax.

Messy Sleep Routines

Going to bed and waking up at completely different times every day (especially on weekends) can throw off your sleep rhythm. Your body loves routine, even if you don't!

Your Sleep Environment

If your room is noisy, bright, or full of distractions, it can be hard to wind down. Bedrooms should be calm, quiet, and dark when it's time to sleep. Sharing a room or having too much going on around you can make it harder to switch off.

Screens Before Bed

Phones, tablets and TVs might feel relaxing, but the light they give off disrupts your body's sleep signals. Plus, interacting with stuff online can actually make you feel more alert, not less.

Tips to improve sleep

Limit screen use. Avoid scrolling on your phone, watching TV, playing on a gaming console etc the hour before bed.



The right space. It is very important that your bed and bedroom are quiet and comfortable for sleeping. A cooler room with enough blankets to stay warm is best. Make sure you have curtains or an eyemask to block out early morning light and earplugs if there is noise outside your room.



Get regular. One of the best ways to train your body to sleep well is to go to bed and get up at more or less the same time every day, even on weekends and days off! This regular rhythm will make you feel better and will give your body something to work from.



Avoid caffeine & nicotine. It is best to avoid consuming any caffeine (in coffee, tea, fizzy drinks, chocolate), or nicotine for at least 4-6 hours before going to bed. These substances act as stimulants and interfere with the ability to fall asleep.



No clock-watching (especially if you turn on the light to read the time) this reinforces negative thoughts such as "Oh no, look how late it is, I'll never get to sleep" or "it's so early, I have only slept for 5 hours, this is terrible."



Bed is for sleeping. Try not to use your bed for anything other than sleeping so that your body comes to associate bed with sleep. If you use bed as a place to watch TV, eat, chill out and other things, your body will not learn this connection.



Keep daytime routine the same.

When we have had a bad night's sleep it's understandable that we might not feel like doing much, or have less energy for our usual activities. We might not be able to perform the same as we usually would and that's ok. However, it's still important to try and do what we had planned for the day, but listen to our body's cues and choose gentler activities if needed. Staying active during the day helps promote a better night's sleep.



Eat right. A healthy, balanced diet will help you to sleep well, but timing is important. Some people find that going to bed hungry can be distracting, so it can be useful to have a light snack, but a heavy meal soon before bed can also interrupt sleep.



Exercise. Regular exercise can help us sleep well, but try not to do strenuous exercise in the 4 hours before bedtime. Morning walks are a great way to start the day feeling refreshed!



Sleep rituals. Good sleep rituals remind your body that it is time to sleep - some people find it useful to do relaxing stretches or breathing exercises for 15 minutes before bed each night, or sit calmly with a cup of caffeine-free tea.



No naps. It is best to avoid taking naps during the day to make sure that you are tired at bedtime. If you can't make it through the day without a nap, make sure it is for less than an hour and before 2pm.



Bathtime. Having a hot bath or shower 1-2 hours before bedtime can be useful, as it will raise your body temperature, causing you to feel sleepy as your body temperature drops again.



Use a sleep diary. Sleep Action:
<https://thesleepcharity.org.uk/information-support/adults/sleep-diary/>

Checklist for sleepy teenagers

If you recognise any of these you may be suffering from sleep deprivation. Do you...

Find it difficult to wake up in the morning or sleep through the alarm?	☐	Sometimes feel very down, or very anxious or stressed and unable to cope?	☐	Often feel tired or lethargic during the day?	☐
Find that you are bad tempered, cross and feel more angry during the afternoon?	☐	Sometimes feel emotional or start crying for no reason?	☐	Find that your hand/eye coordination is not very good?	☐
Fall asleep spontaneously if you are sitting quietly?	☐	Find it difficult to concentrate or focus at school in lessons?	☐	Find that you are accident prone, tripping over a lot or dropping things?	☐
Sleep much longer at the weekend compared to school nights?	☐	Use your mobile phone or play computer games after you've gone to bed?	☐	Find it difficult sometimes to control your behaviour, take unnecessary risks and do silly things?	☐