

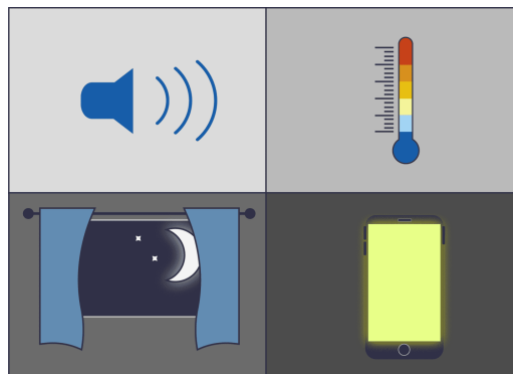
## How to Improve Your Sleep

### Sleep Routines



- Aim for the same wake up time every day
- Get the 7 – 9 hours in bed to get the sleep required to wake refreshed
- Avoid vigorous exercise 2 hours before bedtime
- Avoid the use of alcohol/ & caffeine later in the day
- Avoid using portable electronic devices (Blue LED) before bed as this suppresses melatonin
- Taking a hot/ warm bath can, help as it relaxes and causes heat loss through skin flushing that reduces core temperature
- Allow for completion of 5 x 90 min sleep cycles to get balance of REM & NREM sleep

### Sleep Environments



The environment that you sleep in can have a big impact on the quality of sleep that you get. Here are some suggestions for creating a better sleep environment:

- Noise - Try to remove any noises where possible (alarms, devices). If your sleep cycle is in good shape you should wake naturally but if you need an alarm, choose one that is gentle and doesn't immediately throw you into a state of alarm with the associated adrenaline rush. Some external noises may be unavoidable. If you find them comfortable good earplugs can help!
- Temperature - Better too cold than too warm, 65 degrees F/ 18.3 degrees C is an ideal sleeping temperature.
- Lighting - Remove light sources, cover windows with light blocking curtains/ blinds. Consider a sleeping mask if light remains an issue. This is particularly important for shift workers sleeping in daylight hours.
- Electronics - Remove electronic devices/ screens from bedroom.

## Sleep Disruptors

Sleep disruption can be caused by many factors, including:

- Partner
- Young children
- Pain & Illness
- Normal life stages such as pregnancy and menopause

Any or each of these may require making adjustments and in more challenging circumstances seeking relevant professional advice & support. For more serious sleep conditions, such as, Persistent Insomnia, or Sleep Apnoea (breathing disorder/ heavy snoring) - Seek GP referral to a sleep specialist.

Prevention power naps are a good way to help get the sleep you need, prior to expected sleep disruption/ deprivation. Generally, best taken between 1 - 4pm in a normal day/ night cycle, when you are more likely to feel sleepy but not too close to bedtime to disrupt nighttime sleep. Find a suitable quiet place and nap for 20-30 minutes maximum, to get the benefit but avoid grogginess from longer naps.

Remember if you are suffering from chronic sleep deprivation you may not be aware of the impact that it is having on your behaviour and performance, so it can be good to ask others who you trust to be supportive and give you honest feedback.

## Shift Work



If your job requires you to do shift work outside of the traditional 9 to 5, you will need to focus, especially on how to get good sleep. In addition to all the suggestions in the above sections:

- Avoid frequently rotating shifts or changing your shift pattern too often - Having to adjust to a new sleeping pattern every week can affect the quality of sleep you get. If you have a choice try limiting how much your shifts rotate, or ask for easier transitions such as, day shift to night shift, and not the reverse of that.
- Limit your caffeine intake - A caffeinated drink at the start of your shift is fine to help with alertness but try to avoid more caffeine later in the shift, as it will affect your sleep.
- Create a regular sleep schedule - Track what works and what doesn't in a diary, and when you find the right schedule for the best quality sleep, stick to it.
- Using a 'lightbox' that provides exposure to simulated natural daylight in waking hours can help you adjust.
- Avoid alcohol after shifts - Alcohol can have a negative impact on the quality of sleep, and can lead to a disrupted sleep, and early awakening.
- Before emerging into the daylight after a night shift put on sunglasses to reduce light stimulation & help you prepare for sleep.