



## MONTHLY HOT HEALTH AND WELLBEING TIPS - TROUBLE SLEEPING?

If you're having sleep problems, there are some simple steps you can take to ease those restless nights. Sleep problems are common and how we sleep and how much sleep we need is different for all of us, and also changes as we get older. The good news is that there is lots of support available now and a list of some of these is given in Resources below. Meantime, here are our hot tips:

**Develop a sleep routine** and stick to it! Try to go to bed and get up at roughly the same time (including weekends) and avoid napping/sleeping in to catch up. This includes building in time (20-30 minutes) to relax before you go to sleep – listening to your sleep app, soft music or reading a book.

**Confront sleeplessness** If you can't sleep don't lie there trying to force it. Get up and follow your relaxation routine above, and wait until you feel sleepy.

**Create a restful environment** Dark, quiet and cool environments generally make it easier to fall asleep and stay asleep. Pay attention to whether you are too hot/too cold or if there is something (or someone!) keeping you awake. Eye masks, hot water bottle, ear plugs may help.

**Write down your worries** If it's the 'jobs for tomorrow' which is keeping you awake, keep a pen and paper by the side of your bed so that if you wake up you can off-load them quickly by writing them down. Better still, if this is a pattern for you, write them down before you go to sleep.

**Move more, sleep better** Being active regularly can help you sleep better but avoid vigorous exercise before bedtime.

**Avoid Caffeine** as it is a stimulant and if you drink lots of it throughout the day this may stop you falling asleep or impact the quality of your sleep (so you still feel tired in the morning). Alcohol, coffee, tea, cola, chocolate, all have caffeine in them – try decaffeinated drinks from midday onwards if you have difficulty sleeping.

**SMOKING –** Nicotine is a stimulant and so can impact your sleep. If you can't give up, then try not to smoke at least 4 hours before bedtime.

**Medicines and other drugs** Some medicines/drugs are stimulants so it is worth checking the information leaflet or discussing with your Pharmacist. Sleeping tablets or some herbal remedies can help but they can interfere with the quality of your sleep so you should only take them for a short time and discuss with your Pharmacist or GP.

**Electronic devices** Try not to use electronic devices such as mobile phones, tablets, or watch television for up to an hour before bedtime. The blue light emitting from these devices can act as a stimulant and can also affect the production of melatonin, which is the hormone that regulates your sleep cycle. Avoid having your alarm clock visible as well as this can be a source of stress if you wake up.

## SUMMARY

- ✓ **DO** develop a regular sleep pattern, including sufficient time to relax
- ✓ **DO** get up if you can't sleep and follow your relaxing routine
- ✓ **DO** exercise regularly but not just before bedtime
- ✓ **DO** make sure where you sleep is comfortable, quiet, cool and dark
  
- X **DON'T** use electronic devices just before bed time
- X **DON'T** eat or drink anything with caffeine in the hours before bedtime
- X **DON'T** smoke close to bedtime
- X **DON'T** take naps or stay in bed to catch up

These techniques have been proven to help many people, but it can take weeks for your sleep to improve so you will need patience and commitment. However, if you feel that the problem is not improving or is getting worse, then talk to your Pharmacist or GP.

## RESOURCES

### Sleepio

Sleepio is a clinically evidenced sleep improvement programme that is fully automated and highly personalised, using cognitive behavioural techniques to help improve poor sleep. Big Health is offering free access to Sleepio for all NHS staff until 31 December, active now.

#### How NHS staff can get access

Answer a few short questions to tailor the programme to you. Sign up for an account using your name and email address. Click 'Personalize Sleepio'



Unmind is a mental health platform that empowers staff to proactively improve their mental wellbeing. Using scientifically backed assessments, tools and training you can measure and manage your personal mental health needs, including digital programmes designed to help with stress, sleep, coping, connection, fulfilment and nutrition.

They are offering free access to NHS staff until the end of December 2020, active now.

## How NHS staff can get access

Sign up with your NHS email address. Download the Unmind app from your app store

Your organisation name is 'NHS' – if you do not see your NHS email domain please contact [support@unmind.com](mailto:support@unmind.com) and include your email domain



Headspace is a science-backed app in mindfulness and meditation, providing unique tools and resources to help reduce stress, build resilience, and aid better sleep.

They are offering free access to all NHS staff with an NHS email address until 31 December, active now.

## How NHS staff can get access

You will need to use your NHS email address to sign up. Download the Headspace app from your app store



Daylight is a smartphone-based app that provides help to people experiencing symptoms of worry and anxiety, using evidence-based cognitive behavioural techniques, voice and animation.

Big Health is offering free access to Daylight for all NHS staff until 31 December, active now.

## How NHS staff can get access

Answer a few short questions to tailor the programme to you. Sign up for an account using your name and email address

Download the Daylight app from your app store (search: Daylight- Worry less)

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER ADVICE AND GUIDANCE CAN BE FOUND HERE

<https://www.sleepstation.org.uk/articles/>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/sleep-problems/sleep-problems/>

<https://sleepcouncil.org.uk/>

<https://people.nhs.uk/>