

### Sleepless? Try not to lose sleep over it.

Anxiety and depression can affect the quality of your sleep. Worrying about sleeplessness can make things worse. But, try not to lose sleep over it:

- *“I’ve lost several night’s sleep”*. Eventually you’ll have a good nights sleep and that’s usually sufficient.
- *“I haven’t slept a wink all night”*. You’ll almost certainly have drifted off for several hours without realising it.
- *“I’m not getting enough sleep”*. Some people can get by on as little as 5 hours. You also need less as you get older. You might have needed 8 solid hours at 20 but you might only need 6 or 7 at 40.
- *“I wake during the night and then can’t get back to sleep”* We evolved to need segmented sleep; sleeping for four hours, waking for an hour or two (to check for sabre toothed tigers) then going back to sleep.
- 70% of responders to a 2011 IKEA/Which? survey stated they weren’t getting enough sleep. You could say its normal!



But if you’re still losing sleep over it then follow this guide and sleep will come, even if it takes weeks, it will come:

1. Lifestyle: Keep Active and Eat Healthy.
2. Make your bedroom your sleep zone.
3. How to go to bed.
4. Now what? Everyone is asleep except you!

## How to improve your sleep quality

### 1. Lifestyle: Keep Active and Eat Healthy

- **Keep Active.** We evolved to expend lots of energy to survive during the day and then fall asleep, physically exhausted, at night. Sleeplessness can be caused simply because we have not been active enough.
- **Eat Healthy.** High-protein diets in particular, can suppress the production of sleep hormone (sour cherry juice can encourage production of sleep hormone).



### 2. Make your bedroom your sleep zone

- Block out natural light in the evenings and in the mornings: fit blackout blinds or curtain linings. The production of melatonin, the all-important sleep-inducing hormone, is extremely light-sensitive.
- Back or shoulder ache when you wake up? Get a more comfortable mattress.
- Your core body temperature drops a few degrees during deep sleep, help it by limiting your bedroom temperature to around 18°C.

## How to improve your sleep quality

### 3. How to go to bed

4 hours before bedtime:

- Avoid or reduce stimulants: cigarettes, caffeine (coffee or tea).
- Avoid strenuous exercise: it can raise your core body temperature, which inhibits sleep.
- Avoid alcohol: it disrupts sleep and wakes you up too early.

1 hour before bedtime. Make it your special hour:

- Switch off: conclude on any decisions or add them to tomorrow's to-do list.
- Switch off back-lit devices: they can reduce sleep hormone production by over 20%.
- Wind down: get into a good book, listen to a playlist of relaxing favourites, luxuriate in the bath, watch some escapist TV.

It's bedtime. Get into a bedtime habit:

- Stick to the same bedtime (special occasions excepted!).
- Establish a nightly routine: load the dishwasher, check doors are locked, brush your teeth, turn out the lights. Little cues that your body will learn to associate with sleep!
- Stick to the same wake time and avoid weekend lie ins.
- Don't recovery sleep, a little bit of sleep deprivation will soon get you back into a better sleep Routine.



## How to improve your sleep quality

### 4. Now what? Everyone is asleep except you!

Not quite switched off?

- Let something pleasant take over your thoughts, e.g., replay a day from your last holiday or walk around your favourite place.
- Tempt sleep to take over. Try to keep your eyes open and as they naturally close tell yourself to 'resist closing them for another few seconds'.
- Concentrate on your breathing. Breathe deeply and slowly. Repeat silently the words 'in' and 'out' in time to your breathing. Try breathing in to the count of 'three' and out to the count of 'four'.
- Concentrate on your body. Tense your arms for a few seconds and then relax them for ten seconds. Then repeat with your neck, your shoulders, your chest, your stomach, your legs.

Still not switched off?

- If you're lying awake for more than 30 mins then go somewhere else and relax until tired.
- Avoid bright lights though, even a little exposure can significantly suppress sleep hormone levels.

