

Managing sleep problems

Develop a routine

Try to wake up and go to bed at the same time each day. Our bodies respond well to routines.

Establish a bedtime ritual

About an hour before you go to sleep dim the lights (this releases a hormone which helps us sleep) and engage in something relaxing.

Avoid working or watching television in bed

It's important that your body and mind associate your bed with sleep.

Exercise regularly

Physical activity can aid sleep but don't be too active just before going to bed. Make sure any exercise you do happens at least two hours before bedtime.

Try not to eat a heavy meal before bed

However, a light snack if you are feeling peckish, and are used to something before you sleep, is just fine.

Avoid clockwatching

Staring at the clock when you can't sleep will only increase your anxiety and make it even more difficult to fall asleep. Consider turning the clock face out of your view.

Reduce alcohol intake

You might feel that alcohol helps you to relax and fall asleep, but your quality of sleep with too much alcohol is likely to be poor. It's best to keep alcohol consumption to a minimum.

Breathe

Waking in the middle of the night can be frustrating. Try some of the deep breathing and relaxation exercises you learned in this programme and on the Maggie's relaxation CD, to help lull you back to sleep.

Minimise discomfort

If your sleep problems are due to pain or discomfort, speak to your GP or specialist who may be able to get you specific pillows or cushions for support.

Take a warm bath

If you like to take a bath before bed, try to make sure it is not too hot. An elevated body temperature can make it difficult to fall asleep. Try a warm bath, or if you like a hot bath just take it a bit earlier in the night so your body has time to cool down.

Enjoy the relaxation

Although sleep is important, the rest and relaxation of lying in bed is also beneficial. Next time you are having difficulty falling asleep, try to take the focus off being asleep and just enjoy being relaxed.

Should your sleep problems persist, speak to your GP or specialists. It might also be helpful to keep a sleep diary. Tracking the pattern and duration of your sleep can be a helpful way of tracking the problem

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