



Sleep Well for Better Health

Sleep is a very important part of our wellbeing - it impacts almost every system in our bodies.

There is no other state of wakefulness that provides us with the same benefits that sleep does!

Impact of Good Quality Sleep

Our sleep impacts both our physical and mental health!
Here's how:

During sleep, our body and mind are re-charged, leaving us fresh and alert when we wake up. For children and teenagers, sleep is particularly important for growth and development. A lack of sleep can lead to higher risks of physical or mental health issues.

Results of a good quality and uninterrupted sleep routine



Waking up feeling refreshed and ready for the day



Better overall mood



Better stress management



Getting along better with other people



Lower risk of long-term health problems

Signs that you may not be getting the sleep you need.



Waking up feeling like you still need more sleep.



Difficulties with memory or concentration



Slower reaction times



Increased stress, irritability, or low moods



What happens when we sleep?

We have an internal body clock that controls our sleep cycle, and impacts when we feel refreshed and alert, or tired and ready for bed. This operates on a 24-hour cycle called a **circadian rhythm**, keeping the body healthy by making sure that all its processes are co-ordinated throughout the day.

Our Sleep Architecture

(the structure of our sleep stages and cycles)

We actually go through a number of sleep cycles in a single night. Each one lasts between 70 and 120 minutes, and is made up of distinct phases that are crucial to how sleep works.

Stage 1 Typically 1-5 minutes	Our brain and body start to switch into lower levels of activity after just a minute of falling unconscious. Our heart rate and breathing slow down and your mental activity decreases.
Stage 2 Typically 10-60 minutes	The body and the brain continue to slow down, although it is much easier to be woken up during these first stages.
Stage 3 Typically 20-40 minutes	This is the deepest stage of sleep. Our body is more relaxed here, and our brain is relatively slow in its activity. This is where our body does most of its restoration and recovery work, and is also an important stage for clear reasoning and long-term memory.
Stage 4 Typically 10-60 minutes	This stage is also referred to as 'Rapid Eye Movement (REM) Sleep' and is where memory and learning are mostly consolidated. Here, activity in our brain increases significantly, whilst the body becomes immobile apart from the eyes and breathing muscles. Dreams happen most frequently during this stage of sleep.



What makes us feel tired?

There are two processes that control our drive towards sleep based on our biological clock, the time of day, how long we have already been awake, and how much light we are exposed to.

sleep-wake homeostasis:

The longer we stay conscious, the more sleepy we feel. This drive towards sleep is the same drive that pushes us to sleep longer and deeper after a relatively longer period of not getting enough sleep.

the circadian alerting system:

This refers to the 24-hour circadian rhythm as mentioned above, and is influenced largely by exposure to light.

How much is enough sleep?

In reality, people vary greatly in their need for sleep, as this depends on a number of factors as mentioned above. Therefore, there is no set rule, as long as we get **good quality sleep on a regular schedule.**

... however, research has found that getting less than 7 hours of sleep is linked with poorer mental and physical health in adults. People who regularly get less than 7 hours of sleep are more likely to gain weight, be less productive, get into an accident, or suffer from chronic disease such as diabetes, hypertension, or depression.

Children and youths tend to need more hours of sleep than adults.



Tips for Better Sleep

'Sleep Hygiene' is about putting ourselves in the best position to sleep well on a regular schedule. It involves making changes to our daily routines to make sure that we are feeling well-rested and energised!



Set and stick to a sleep schedule

Go to sleep and wake up at the same time each day, including weekends, if possible! Say 'no' to skipping sleep to work, study, or socialise.



Cultivate pro-sleep habits

Don't rush into your routine as you wake up, and expose yourself to daylight as early as you can. Meanwhile, avoid harsh lights, exercise, heavy meals, caffeine, and alcohol as you get closer to bedtime.



Perfect your sleeping environment

Keep your bed and sleeping environment comfortable and inviting, dim the lights when it's time to sleep, and control noise and temperature levels.



Create a nightly bedtime routine to wind down

Your routine can include personal hygiene, self-care, listening to music or podcasts, using relaxation techniques, or reading... but try to avoid digital devices during this time.



Monitor your sleep duration and quality

Take note of how long and well you sleep, as well as your exercise, mood, diet, caffeine, alcohol or medications to learn more about how your habits affect your sleep and health.

If you find that you cannot sleep, do not stay in bed for hours. Instead, get up for a bit, and try to do an activity before returning to bed again. This will help to keep your sleeping space only for sleeping!



How can I evaluate my sleep?

Understanding our personal sleeping patterns is an important step in making the changes we need.

By recording details similar to the template below, we can record factors that might be influencing our sleeping cycle and quality.

Date	When I Slept	Duration	Quality	Notes

On a scale from 1 to 5, rate your sleep quality on this day

Write about activities like physical exercise, napping, caffeine intake, or medications here.

tech savvy?

many smartphone applications contain sleep-trackers that make the process easier!

If you notice your sleeping pattern is interfering with your day-to-day life or causing you distress, speak to your doctor for support.