

# SLEEP (YOUNG PEOPLE)

## MAKE YOUR ROOM SLEEP FRIENDLY

**Your sleep cycle:** Try to go to sleep and get up at the same time each day. Make sure the room is dark, well ventilated and switch off or cover up electronic light.

**Reserve your bed for sleeping:** Keep your bed somewhere your brain feels restful. Try not to work, watch tv or use your computer.

## GO OFFLINE EARLIER

Melatonin\* is a hormone controlled by light. When it's dark your brain creates more melatonin making you feel sleepy. Alternatively light has the opposite effect and makes us more alert.

**Avoid bright screens:** Ideally 1-2 hours before your bedtime. The blue light emitted by your phone, tablet, computer, or TV makes your brain stimulated and feeling less like sleep

**It's okay to not be available 24/7:** Feeling like we are going to miss out on something is hard, realistically though nothing THAT exciting is going to happen at 3am, it's okay to give yourself a break from the world for a few hours.

**Switch off your notifications:** Notifications coming in create dopamine which can in turn fill our bodies with adrenalin (the opposite of melatonin). Even if you don't switch your phone off, think about putting it on sleep mode or switching off your apps.

**During the daytime:** Try and soak in natural daylight, take a walk outside, this helps your body get into a better sleep/wake cycle.

## EMPTY YOUR WORRIES ONTO PAPER

Making lists of all the things we need to do and the worries we have in our heads can really help us switch off. Writing it down means we are not going to forget it but that we are telling our brains that it's okay to switch off and relax, it can pick all these things up again in the morning.

## EXERCISE DURING THE DAY

Regular exercise during the day is a great way to help improve our sleep. However make sure all vigorous exercise is finished at least three hours before bedtime. Relaxation exercises such as deep breathing and yoga can help your mind and body wind down.

## SNACKS AND SLEEP

**Caffeine:** Drinking caffeine (tea/coffee/coke) can cause sleep problems up to ten to twelve hours after drinking it. Try to swap to herbal tea or milky drinks in the evening.

**Late night snacks:** Try to keep evening snacks earlier rather than later and avoid sugar or carbs. Instead go for bananas (these actually make us sleepy!), dairy such as yoghurts or milk, nuts, honey and oats are also great.

## CREATE A GOOD BEDTIME ROUTINE

**Do what helps you relax:** In the hours before sleep think of ways that help you relax. For some it may be taking a bath, for others its reading or listening to music (Note- Kindles for evening reading aren't great as they also emit blue light which can make your brain feel more active).

**Deep breathing:** Close your eyes and take deep, slow breaths, making each breath even deeper than the last.

**Visualizing a peaceful safe place:** Close your eyes and imagine a place that's calming and peaceful.

\*Adults and young people with any learning needs, cognitive or physical, tend to produce far less melatonin than neurotypical people, which leads to sleep disorders so GPs can prescribe melatonin should sleep continue to be a long term issues.