

How to get to sleep

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A sleep hygiene guide for anxious times

During times of prolonged worry it's very normal for people to experience sleep disruption. These seven suggestions might help you to get a better night's sleep.

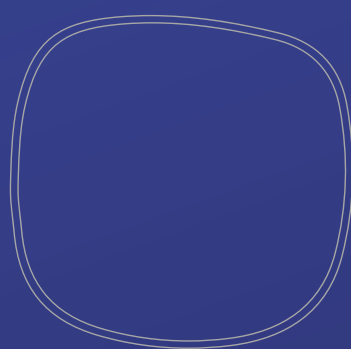


1) A good night's sleep starts in the day

There's a lot you can do during the day to help your nighttime sleep – making your bed in the morning, doing daytime physical exercise, and getting some sunlight can all help. Daytime naps should be limited to 30 minutes maximum. Avoid alcohol, caffeine, nicotine and rich foods in the evenings.

2) Protect your sleep space

Try to make your sleep space as calm and uncluttered as you can. It also helps if your bedroom is dark and cool. Your bed should be used for sleep and sex only, so keep other activities like working from home out of the bedroom wherever possible.



3) Switch it off

Looking at mobile phones and other electronic devices at night disrupts sleep, particularly during times of high anxiety and increased news traffic. Try to stay off your phone for at least one hour before bed, and use functions such as 'do not disturb' to minimise nighttime disruption.

4) Get into a bedtime routine

Try to establish a regular bedtime and a nightly relaxation routine. This could include having a warm bath or shower, doing some gentle stretches, reading a soothing book, or practicing a relaxation or mindfulness exercise. Try to avoid upsetting conversations or news during your relaxation period.



5) Write down the worries



If you're finding that particular worries are keeping you up at night, it can be helpful to make a 'worry time' deal with your mind. Write down your worries in a notebook by the bed and agree that you'll think about them in the morning – things tend to feel a lot less scary in daylight.

6) Relax your mind

Holding on to frustration and tension will not help you sleep. Try practicing deep breathing and mindfulness exercises to help your mind switch off ('Body scan' and 'Leaves on a stream' are great exercises to start with and are widely available online).



7) Practice kindness

During times like these, we all need some extra love and support. Focussing on feelings of love and compassion can help to trigger your body's relaxation processes, so be kind to your mind, and send love to those around you.



Compiled by Clinical Psychologist Dr Rose Stewart

Sources:

sleepfoundation.org, <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/how-to-get-to-sleep/>

The Compassionate Mind Foundation