



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
ALLIANCE TRAINING HUB

A Lifestyle Approach to Sleep

It is important to remember that none of these is a cure all. The following worksheet aims to identify several areas in which small, incremental changes can be made to improve the overall quality and quantity of sleep.



Diet

- Eliminate night-time caffeine and limit daytime caffeine, consider stopping caffeine containing beverages after 2pm.
- Avoid alcohol within 3 hours of bed.
- Eliminate late night or after dinner snacking.
- Avoid high salt foods.
- Ensure adequate daytime fluid intake (ideally water).
- Maintain BMI in healthy range.
- If falling asleep is a problem, eat a carbohydrate rich breakfast and a low carb dinner, if early waking is a problem, shift carbohydrates from breakfast to dinner.
- Avoid diuretic beverages in the evening (alcohol or caffeine).

Physical activity

- Increased daytime physical activity, preferably outdoors, improves regulation of circadian rhythm and sleep quality, particularly in the morning or late afternoon. If falling asleep is a problem (rather than early waking) then exercising earlier in the day is better.
- Get up and move once per hour.
- Do not overexert yourself during exercise such that pain disrupts sleep.

Stress management

- Start settling down 1 hour before bed, including active relaxation e.g. through both, meditation, guided imagery, music of 60bpm. Stop working or doing stimulating activities 90 minutes before bed.
- Mitigate night-time worrying, planning and ruminating, through mindfulness or CBT for insomnia. Notice when you are doing these things and use breathing exercises, mindfulness or a body-scan to reset your thinking.

Relationships

- Consider and where possible address relationship issues which may be causing night time worrying, or disturbances.

Risky substances

- Alcohol substantially reduces sleep quality – do not drink alcohol in the 3 hours before going to bed.

Sleep – other advice

- Ensure adequate sleep opportunity – protect the same 8-hour window for sleep in each 24 hour period.
- Use bed for sleep and sex only.
- Establish regular sleep cycle for bedtime and wake-time.
- Increase bedtime peripheral cutaneous vasodilation by a bath or shower, hot water bottle or socks for cold feet or non-caffeinated warm beverage.
- Avoid blue spectrum light use (TV, phone) in the hour before bed.
- Minimize bedroom noise and lights. Consider digital displays, charger lights and alarm clocks – place all of these out of sight.
- If falling asleep is a problem, increase morning natural light exposure. If early waking is a problem, then avoid bright lights until after ideal wake up time, and increase afternoon/evening exposure to natural light.