

# Are you sleeping soundly?

A nationwide study revealed that we spend an average of 100 days every year in bed. While this sounds amazing, it only equates to 6.6 hours a night, 90 minutes below the recommended 8 hours. Poor quality sleep is known to lead to problems with learning, memory, concentration and low mood, which can contribute to unfulfilled potential at work as well as strained relationships at home. It can be particularly difficult for young children and teenagers who are growing fast and spending their days learning at school.

So here are some basic tips for getting a good night's sleep:

- Create a restful sleeping environment. Your bedroom should be kept for rest and sleep and it should be neither too hot, nor too cold; and as quiet and dark as possible.
- Take more exercise. Regular, moderate exercise such as swimming or walking can help relieve the day's stresses and strains. But not too close to bedtime or it may keep you awake!
- Cut down on stimulants such as caffeine in tea or coffee - especially in the evening. They interfere with falling asleep and prevent deep sleep. Have a hot milky drink or herbal tea instead.
- Don't over-indulge. Too much food or alcohol, especially late at night, just before bedtime, can play havoc with sleep patterns. Alcohol may help you fall asleep initially, but will interrupt your sleep later on in the night.
- Don't smoke. Yes, it's bad for sleep, too: smokers take longer to fall asleep, wake more often and often experience more sleep disruption.
- Deal with worries or a heavy workload by making lists of things to be tackled the next day.
- If you can't sleep, don't lie there worrying about it. Get up and do something you find relaxing until you feel sleepy again - then go back to bed.

**If you are experiencing problems sleeping, you can contact Care first.** Care first is a leading provider of confidential, professional counselling, information and advice services. All employees are eligible to use Care First. Services include telephone counselling, information services.

**Call Care First on 0800 174319** and you can speak to a professional counsellor in confidence.

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