

Having trouble sleeping?



Information for patients, relatives and carers

Good sleep doesn't just mean lots of sleep: it means the right kind of sleep.

Sleep affects our ability to use language, sustain attention, understand what we are reading, and summarise what we are hearing; if we compromise on our sleep, we compromise on our performance, our mood, and our interpersonal relationships.

Sleep has also been shown to protect the immune system. The amount that each person needs is different; however, it is recommended that a healthy adult should sleep, on average, between seven and nine hours a night

Sleep in pregnancy

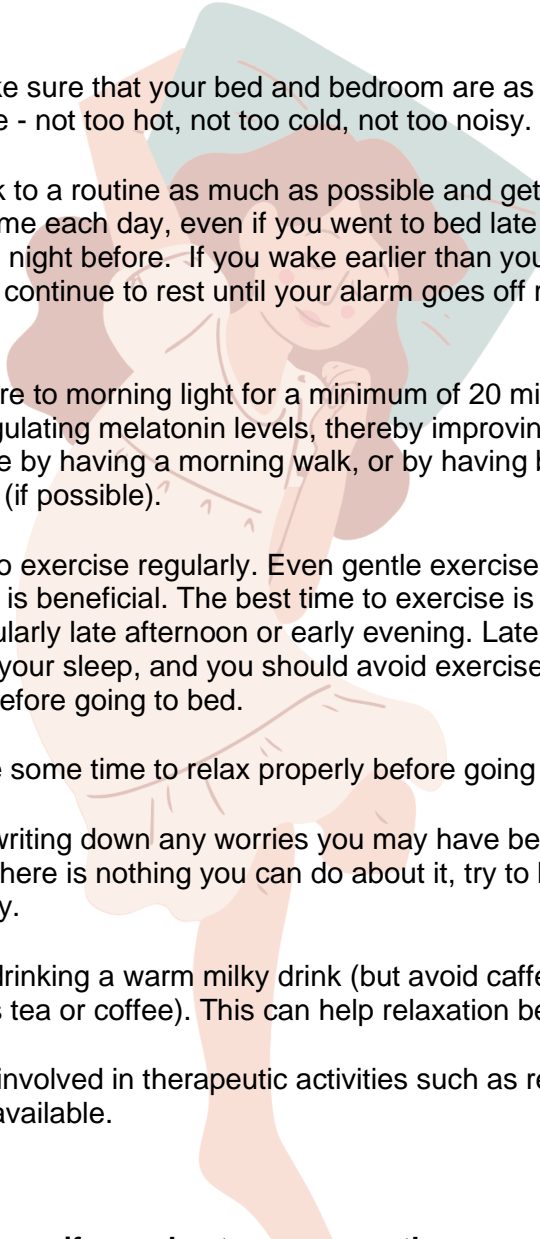
Your sleep requirements may increase temporarily at various stages in pregnancy, but not by too much. Typical times for this are in the early stages and the last few weeks.

Your sleep maybe influenced by other factors such as physical discomfort, medication, physical health and environmental factors. Similar ways of coping and improving poor quality sleep can help whether you are pregnant or not.

The following pages have some helpful advice, some methods may work better for you than others. Try simple changes first and build from there.



Do...

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- Do make sure that your bed and bedroom are as comfortable as possible - not too hot, not too cold, not too noisy.
 - Do stick to a routine as much as possible and get up at the same time each day, even if you went to bed late or didn't sleep well the night before. If you wake earlier than your alarm setting, continue to rest until your alarm goes off rather than get up.
 - Exposure to morning light for a minimum of 20 minutes helps with regulating melatonin levels, thereby improving sleep. This could be by having a morning walk, or by having breakfast outside (if possible).
 - Do try to exercise regularly. Even gentle exercise such as walking is beneficial. The best time to exercise is during the day - particularly late afternoon or early evening. Later than this can disturb your sleep, and you should avoid exercise in the two hours before going to bed.
 - Do take some time to relax properly before going to bed.
 - Do try writing down any worries you may have before going to bed. If there is nothing you can do about it, try to leave it to the next day.
 - Do try drinking a warm milky drink (but avoid caffeinated drinks such as tea or coffee). This can help relaxation before bed
 - Do get involved in therapeutic activities such as relaxation where available.

****Please be aware if you plan to use aromatherapy, advice must be sought from a suitably trained clinician when pregnant, as some aromatherapy oils are not suitable for use in pregnancy****

Don't...

- Don't go without sleep for a long time
- Don't consume drinks containing caffeine such as tea coffee or stimulant drinks after midday. Chamomile tea is naturally caffeine free and encourages rest so can be used as an alternative.
- Try not to nap during the day - it will prevent you from sleeping at night. If you cannot stay awake, limit the time you nap to less than an hour.
- Don't eat or drink too much late in the evening - heavy meals can cause indigestion and drinking too much late in the evening will mean you need to get up and use the toilet. Do make sure you stay well hydrated during the day however, by drinking at least 6-8 glasses of fluid.
- Don't use screen devices e.g. phones/tablets in the 2 hours prior to bedtime. Blue light can disrupt melatonin levels and therefore your sleep.
- Don't sleep late the next morning (even if you've had a bad night). This will make it harder to go to sleep the following night.
- Don't do anything too arousing or stimulating just before bed such as watching a horror film, exercising etc.
- Don't smoke around bedtime as this can prevent you from falling asleep.
- Don't drink alcohol. Advice is not to drink alcohol in pregnancy. It may have previously helped you get off to sleep, but you will probably have disrupted, poorer quality sleep.
- Don't use slimming or street drugs such as ecstasy, cocaine or amphetamines - these are all stimulants and can keep you awake.

Smoking, alcohol, drugs, and medications not prescribed specifically for you, are not recommended in pregnancy or whilst looking after children.

Help is available free from the NHS, for reducing and stopping smoking, alcohol intake and drug use. Please ask your GP or midwife for a referral. This is also available for other family members if needed.

HEALing

A guide to improving:

Health Environment Attitude Lifestyle

Health

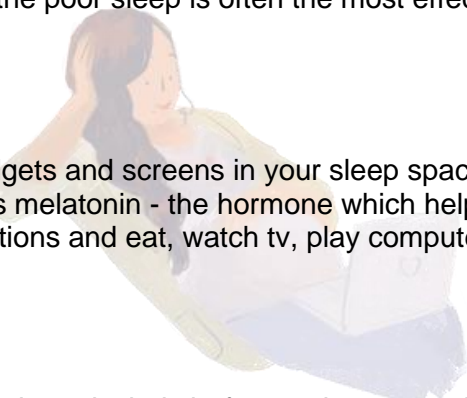
Mental health problems like anxiety and depression can affect our sleep. In these cases, a combined approach to tackle both the mental health issue and the poor sleep is often the most effective method of treatment.

Environment

Be mindful of gadgets and screens in your sleep space. The 'blue light' displays suppress melatonin - the hormone which helps you sleep. Try to remove distractions and eat, watch tv, play computer games in another room.

Attitude

Lying awake in bed, particularly before an important day, can make us worry. Progressive relaxation techniques can help you to relax and unwind at these times. A free audio podcast can be found at www.mentalhealth.org.uk/help-information/podcasts. Sleep problems that continue for more than a month need to be addressed by your GP and it would be beneficial to be referred for Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).



Mindfulness (a type of meditation) can also be useful in reducing stress: www.bemindful.co.uk

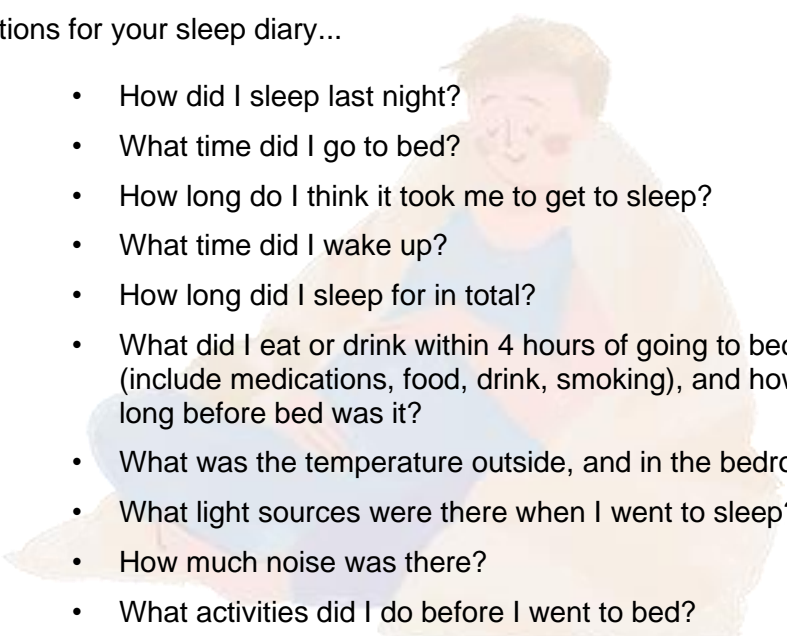
Lifestyle

Making small changes to our water intake and eating less sugary or processed foods, can aid restful sleep. Finding a yoga class suitable for pregnancy or post-birth, or just taking a walk can boost your mood and help your sleep.

Keeping a sleep diary

A sleep diary can be a useful tool to track all the **HEAL**ing elements and be able to adjust things that aren't working. It can also be a space to write down the thoughts which are preventing you from drifting off.

Questions for your sleep diary...

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- How did I sleep last night?
 - What time did I go to bed?
 - How long do I think it took me to get to sleep?
 - What time did I wake up?
 - How long did I sleep for in total?
 - What did I eat or drink within 4 hours of going to bed? (include medications, food, drink, smoking), and how long before bed was it?
 - What was the temperature outside, and in the bedroom?
 - What light sources were there when I went to sleep?
 - How much noise was there?
 - What activities did I do before I went to bed?
 - Any other comments?
 - How well did I feel the next day? 1=awful, 5=average, 10=great
 - Include a description e.g. drowsy, grumpy, spaced out.

Helping your baby to sleep

Some babies sleep much more than others. Some sleep for long periods, others in short bursts. Some soon sleep through the night, while some don't for a long time.

Your baby will have their own pattern of waking and sleeping, and it's unlikely to be the same as other babies you know.

It's also unlikely to fit in with your need for sleep. Try to sleep when your baby sleeps. Lack of sleep for parents can affect their mental health. Ask others for help if you are struggling (family, friends, health visitor or GP).

If you're breastfeeding, in the early weeks your baby is likely to doze off for short periods during a feed. Carry on feeding until you think your baby has finished or until they're fully asleep. This is a good opportunity to try to get a bit of rest yourself.

If you're not sleeping at the same time as your baby, don't worry about keeping the house silent while they sleep. It's good to get your baby used to sleeping through a certain amount of noise.

Further advice for helping babies to sleep can be found at:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/caring-for-a-newborn/helping-your-baby-to-sleep/>

<https://www.basisonline.org.uk/>

Safer sleeping advice for newborns is available through the Lullaby Trust:

<https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/>



Other Resources:

NSDR: Non-Sleep Deep Rest: www.nsdr.co

Bedtime Meditation video: www.nhs.uk – search for 'meditation'
www.mind.org.uk – search for 'sleep'

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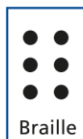
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Translation



Audio



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Legal Notice

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