Sleep:
Finding our confidence with sleep

MHF Tips for Young People Series

"When I was in Year 7, I wish I had known that a good sleep pattern early on is so useful, instead of having bad sleep habits now!"

Peer Educator from the Peer Education Project

Your sleep routine

Be patient

It is normal to feel unsure or frustrated about sleep, especially if we feel like we have tried lots of things that haven't worked.

The important thing is to be patient and give your body time to adjust when trying new things – good sleep health develops over time.

Read **advice** on common questions about sleep health from sleep experts.

Peer Education Project

Mental Health Foundation

Your sleep routine

Set a routine

Having a regular routine helps to improve sleep. It's sometimes called sleep hygiene.

A good sleep routine includes having a set time to start winding down before bed, as well as having fixed bedtimes and wake times. Ideally, a sleep routine should be the same every day, including weekends.

Your sleep routine

Be mindful of food and drink

The food and drink you have in the hours before bedtime, can influence the quality of your sleep.

Try drinks that encourage a calming effect on the body and aid sleep, like chamomile tea, rather than sugary, caffeinated drinks.

Eat foods like bananas, cherries and even tomatoes, if you are hungry before bed, which can all help promote sleep.

Your sleep routine

Get moving

There are many benefits to moving our bodies including improving our sleep!

Find time to exercise or move your body during the day, which can release tension and energy and get your body ready for sleep.

Read tips on when to exercise for good sleep.

PP Peer Education Project

Mental Health Foundation

Your sleep routine

Switch off your screens

Screens at bedtime can make it harder to fall asleep because they suppress the production of the sleep hormone, melatonin, which we get from dim and dark spaces.

Try to reduce your screen time before bed. You could still use your phone or device to listen to a podcast or a guided

meditation to help you get to sleep, but avoid looking at the screen, where possible.

PP Peer Education Project

Mental Health Foundation

Your sleep routine

Track your sleep

Create and use a sleep diary that records the timing, quality, and quantity of your sleep. This would give a more realistic idea about the type of sleep you get, and can be used to help you plan how to get better quality sleep.
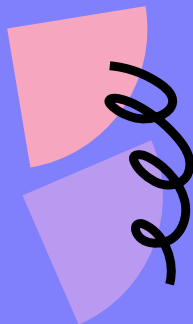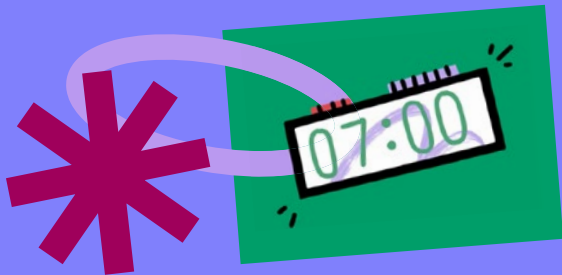
Try this **simple PDF Sleep Diary** or the **Sleep Cycle app** to track your sleep.

Peer Education Project

Mental Health Foundation

"Like after a good night's sleep you don't mind getting up early, you feel ready to get on with things."

Peer Learner from the Peer Education Project

Clear your head

Sometimes we may find our minds are in a busy headspace, thinking about things that may have happened that day or could happen in the future. It can be helpful to find ways to calm the mind, and bring focus to the present moment.

Keep a pen and paper next to your bed to write down anything that is on your mind before you go to sleep. This may help you to stop worrying about things that are keeping you awake, knowing you can return to them in the morning if it is important.

Try these essential sleep playlists to relax and get a good night's sleep.

PP Peer Education Project

Mental Health Foundation

Your sleep environment

Dim the lights

Keeping your sleeping space as dimmed as possible at nighttime can help your body prepare for sleep. Darkness releases a hormone called melatonin, which relaxes the body.

You may need support from someone at home to help you with adjusting your sleep environment.

Use an eye mask, especially if others in the house need lights on around your bedtime.

Put up some blackout curtains to block out the streetlights or light from the moon.

Put your phone or tablet down before turning lights out.

Peer Education Project

Mental Health Foundation

Create your own sleep zone

It can be helpful to think about our bedrooms being divided into different zones. If possible, it is important to keep one zone – our bed – just for sleeping. This may not always be possible. You may need to use your bed as a place to do work. If this is the case, try to have time between finishing homework and preparing for sleep, to help separate the two functions.

Peer Education Project

Mental Health Foundation

Your sleep environment

Temperature check

Your core body temperature follows our 24-hour body clock, known as our circadian rhythm. At the start of the day, body temperature is low and rises steadily throughout the day. As evening draws in, it begins to drop again. A drop in core body temperature is thought to be a signal for our bodies to prepare for sleep.

When preparing for sleep, think about the temperature of the room you sleep in and what you need to do to make it feel comfortable. Do you need to open a window, or block off a draft? Do you need a blanket on, or to wear warmer pyjamas?

PP Peer Education Project

Mental Health Foundation

Noise levels

Reducing noise levels as much as possible can promote good sleep. Sometimes, even if noises don't wake us up at night, they have a subconscious effect on our sleep and change the time we spend in the different sleep stages.

It may not always be possible to reduce the noise levels around us. You may share a room with someone, have members of the household that have different bedtimes than you, pets that might keep you awake, or loud noises outside in the area you live.

Consider finding ways to block out the noise such as ear plugs.

Peer Education Project

Mental Health Foundation

People who will listen

Shout

Trained Shout Volunteers are here for you if you need to talk, 24/7.

Text **SHOUT** to **85285**

Samaritans

If you need someone to talk to, Samaritans Volunteers are there to listen, 24/7.

Call **116 123**

Childline

If you need support, a trained counsellor is available to listen, 24/7.

Call **0800 1111**