

# Herefordshire Community Network

## Support for Ukraine – information for guests

### What is sleep?

Sleep is a normal body process that allows your body and brain to rest. For most people, it's just a matter of getting comfortable, closing your eyes and drifting into slumber. But despite how simple it seems; sleep is one of the most complex and mysterious body processes known to science.



### How many hours of sleep do I need?

A healthy adult usually needs around 7 to 9 hours of sleep. However, age, health and personal circumstances affect how much sleep we need, plus some people naturally sleep more than others. Teenagers, children and babies need more sleep because they are still growing, but that varies, too, with a newborn sleeping anywhere between 8 to 16 hours.

### Possible causes of sleep problems

There are many reasons why we might not sleep well. Some people are naturally lighter sleepers or take longer to get to sleep while others might sleep badly because of anxiety, worry over stressful events or other life challenges. There are lots of things that can influence how well we sleep, such as our current physical or mental health, our upbringing, things that happen to us, and even our temperament. However, bad sleep habits or poor sleep hygiene, such as not relaxing or winding down before bed, often cause sleep problems.

### Signs or symptoms of sleep problems

You may:

- find it difficult to fall asleep
- lie awake for long periods at night
- wake up several times during the night
- wake up early and be unable to get back to sleep
- feel down or have a lower mood

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- have difficulty concentrating
- be more irritable than usual

Longer-term sleep problems can affect our relationships and social life, and leave us feeling tired all the time, eating more and not able to do daily tasks.

### Sleep problems

Sleep problems are common, and the reasons we struggle to sleep are likely to change throughout our lives, for instance, illness, work or having a baby are possible causes. A few sleepless nights are usually nothing to worry about, but it can become an issue if a lack of sleep starts to affect your daily life. Learn more about signs you might be sleep deprived, common symptoms of insomnia and if poor sleep hygiene or sleep habits could be the reason.

### Understanding sleep problems including insomnia

It's important to appreciate why we sleep: to rest and repair our mind and body. It's vital for good physical and mental health and wellbeing. Longer stretches of bad sleep can do the opposite and have a negative impact on our physical and mental health or wellbeing. Not getting enough sleep is sometimes described as being sleep deprived, or called "sleep deprivation", "sleeplessness" or "sleep inefficiency".

### What is the meaning of insomnia?

If someone cannot get to sleep or stay asleep for long enough to feel refreshed, they might have insomnia. Insomnia is a sleep disorder that can last for months or years. Changing your sleeping habits often helps with sleep problems including insomnia. If this does not help or you think you have a sleep problem, see a GP.

### What can I do to make sure I'm getting enough quality sleep?

If you ever ask yourself, "How can I get a good night's sleep?" you're hardly alone. You can do several things to make it easier to get the amount of quality sleep you need. These behaviors all fall under what healthcare providers call "sleep hygiene." They include:

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- **Set and keep to a sleep schedule.** Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, including weekends and vacations. Being consistent can make a big difference in how much and how well you sleep.
- **Make time for sleep.** Pick a bedtime that allows you to get the recommended amount of sleep for your age.
- **Have a bedtime routine.** Going through these actions can “train” your brain that sleep is coming. Your brain will eventually go along with that training.
- **Don’t go to bed unless you feel sleepy.** If it’s bedtime and you don’t feel sleepy, try and do things that will help you relax (especially activities from your bedtime routine, like reading).
- **Avoid bright lights or electronics (especially around bedtime).** Light from these too close to bedtime can disrupt your body’s natural sleep-wake functions.
- **Avoid drinking alcohol or eating a meal too close to bedtime.** A light snack is the best option if you feel hungry before bedtime. Alcohol and food can disrupt sleep (especially when you consume too much of either). And try not to drink too much of any beverage too close to bedtime.
- **Don’t rely on sleeping medications.** Long-term use of sleeping pills and other medications — even ones available over the counter — can negatively affect your sleep. The only sleep-related medications you should use regularly are the ones your healthcare provider prescribes, and you should only take them as instructed.
- **Physical activity can help.** Staying active during the day, even just going for a walk, can help with the quality of your sleep.
- **Use your bedroom for bedroom activities.** That generally means sleeping and intimacy or sex. Your brain uses that sense of place in subtle ways that can affect how you sleep.
- **Maintain a healthy weight.** Your weight can affect your sleep. An example of this is having excess weight, which can increase your risk of developing obstructive sleep apnea.

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To find out more about sleep problems go to the website or scan the QR code

[Sleep problems - Every Mind Matters - NHS](#)



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