This guide will give you principles for good sleep. By making these small changes they could enable you to improve your sleep and give you more energy the following day

Principles for good sleep hygiene

If sleeping is a problem, then it is possible that you have adopted a bad night time routine. It is important to practise good sleep hygiene. This means doing things that are known to improve sleep, and avoid things that may disturb sleep.

Here are 10 points that could enable you to get a better night's sleep; each point is based on scientific research and could help you get the most out of sleep.

1. Products containing caffeine (tea, coffee, cocoa, chocolate and soft drinks etc) should be avoided at least 4 hours before bedtime. Caffeine is a stimulant and can keep you awake. Caffeine can stay in our systems for up to eight hours.
2. Avoid nicotine (including patches and gum) an hour prior to bed and when you wake during the night. Nicotine is also a stimulant.
3. Avoid alcohol around bedtime: although it can aid the promotion of sleep it can also disrupt sleep later in the night.
4. Avoid eating a large meal immediately before bed. However, a light snack such as a glass of water and a piece of fruit or toast, could help, as people can get thirsty or hungry right up to bedtime.

5. Try to do regular exercise. Moving during the day can help us burn off energy so that we can get a deeper sleep at night, but try to avoid this within 2 hours of bed.
6. Keep your bedroom calm and tidy. Select a mattress, sheets, and pillows that are comfortable.
7. Temperature: avoid making your bedroom too hot or too cold.
8. Keep your bedroom quiet and dark during the night, but do try to spend time in the daylight throughout the day. Ideally we should aim to be outside in natural light for around 1 hour a day.
9. Keep your bedroom for sleeping. Limit media exposure. Try to avoid watching the TV and listening to the radio. Plan how you will get your news and when. Over exposure to media can overwhelm us and make it difficult to sleep.
10. Try to keep regular times for going to bed and getting up. Try to plan in some evening activities to help you unwind. (Activities such as yoga, singing, meditation that help calm the nervous system.)

Some people find putting a pen and paper beside the bed helpful. If you think of something whilst you are falling asleep or during the night, you can jot it down and not feel the need to look at your phone or worry about it.

Following these few steps may aid your sleep routine and give you a much better night's sleep.

Useful sources of information

Kevin Morgan, Beverley David, Claire Gascoigne (2007). NHS Sleep Diary. Clinical Sleep Research Unit Loughborough University UK

https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/how-to-get-to-sleep/

https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/10-tips-to-beat-insomnia/

https://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/resources/patient-information/sleep/Sleep-hygiene.pdf

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about any of the information in this leaflet, please contact Rehabilitation Unit on 01342 414 345 (Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 4:00pm).
Alternatively, please contact your GP for further advise and guidance.

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

Telephone: 01342 414315 (PALS)
Email: qvh.pals@nhs.net

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NHS 111
Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

Telephone: 111

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NHS Choices
Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

Website: www.nhs.uk

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Sleep
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