

Sleep Hygiene and Mental Health

Sleep plays an important role in mental health. Difficulties with sleep can worsen mood, anxiety, concentration, and overall functioning.

This leaflet outlines practical strategies to support healthier sleep patterns.

Why Sleep Matters

Good sleep supports:

- Emotional regulation
- Concentration and memory
- Stress tolerance
- Physical health and recovery

Poor sleep can:

- Worsen anxiety and low mood
- Increase irritability
- Reduce coping capacity

Sleep problems are common and often improve gradually with consistent habits.

Understanding Sleep Difficulties

Sleep difficulties may include:

- Difficulty falling asleep
- Frequent waking during the night
- Waking too early
- Non-refreshing sleep

Stress, mental health symptoms, medications, and lifestyle factors can all affect sleep.

Establishing a Consistent Sleep Routine

Helpful strategies include:

- Going to bed and waking at the same time each day

- Keeping wake-up time consistent, even after a poor night's sleep
- Avoiding long daytime naps

Regular routines help regulate the body's internal clock.

The Sleep Environment

Your sleep environment should support rest:

- Quiet, dark, and comfortable
- Cool rather than warm
- Used mainly for sleep (and intimacy)

Avoid using the bed for work, screens, or prolonged wakefulness where possible.

Screens and Stimulation

Before bedtime:

- Reduce screen use (phones, tablets, computers)
- Avoid stimulating activities
- Dim lights in the evening

Blue light and mental stimulation can delay sleep onset.

Caffeine, Alcohol, and Nicotine

These substances can interfere with sleep:

- Avoid caffeine in the afternoon and evening
- Limit alcohol close to bedtime
- Nicotine is stimulating and can disrupt sleep

Even if alcohol helps with falling asleep, it often worsens sleep quality.

Managing Night-Time Wakefulness

If you cannot sleep:

- Avoid watching the clock
- Get out of bed briefly if wide awake
- Engage in a quiet, non-stimulating activity
- Return to bed when sleepy

Lying awake for long periods can reinforce sleep difficulties.

Worry and Overthinking at Night

Helpful strategies include:

- Writing down worries earlier in the evening
- Practising relaxation or breathing exercises
- Keeping a consistent wind-down routine

Sleep often improves as mental health symptoms are treated.

Exercise and Daytime Activity

Regular daytime activity can improve sleep:

- Exercise earlier in the day
- Exposure to natural daylight
- Maintaining daytime structure

Avoid vigorous exercise late in the evening.

Medications and Sleep

Some medications can:

- Improve sleep
- Disrupt sleep
- Cause daytime drowsiness

Sleep concerns related to medication should be discussed during appointments.

When Sleep Does Not Improve

Sleep problems often improve gradually.

If sleep difficulties persist:

- Discuss them with your psychiatrist
 - Further strategies or treatments may be considered
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Summary

Healthy sleep habits support mental health and recovery.

Small, consistent changes are often more effective than sudden major changes.
