



GETTING A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

Sleep problems are becoming increasingly common and can have a profound effect on our overall mood and wellbeing. If you're already struggling with stress, anxiety or depression, you may find that you have difficulty sleeping: This can set up a vicious cycle where lack of good quality sleep makes your mood even worse.

Sleep problems can take various forms:

- Difficulty getting to sleep
- Waking frequently during the night & not being able to get back to sleep
- Waking too early
- Feeling unrefreshed after a night's sleep

Why can't I sleep?

There can be many reasons for sleep problems, and it may take some detective work to find out what is affecting your sleep – everyone is different! However, you might want to start by looking at the checklist below. Do any of these apply to you?

Some common causes of sleep problems...

- Are you feeling stressed or anxious? Both of these conditions can create physical tension and an inability to “switch off” worrying thoughts.
- Are you struggling with low mood? Many people with depression report that they sleep either too much or too little
- Do you have physical health problems that cause you discomfort during the night? These may include chronic pain (for example, from arthritis or fibromyalgia) , “restless legs” or breathing difficulties such as sleep apnoea, COPD or asthma
- Are you taking medication that might be affecting your sleep?
- Do you, or your partner, snore?
- Is there anything in your environment that might be affecting your sleep? For example, is there a lot of background noise, or too much light? Do you have computers or other technology in your bedroom? Is the room too hot or too cold? Is your bed comfortable? Do you feel safe and secure at home?
- Do you have a partner or child who is ill or restless during the night?
- Do you drink a lot of tea, coffee or cola during the day?
- Do you eat a lot of sugary foods, or eat heavy meals late in the evening?
- Do you have a low level of physical activity during the day?
- Do you work shifts, or go to bed and get up at irregular times?
- Do you frequently worry about not getting enough sleep?
- Do you use alcohol to “wind down” at the end of the day?

Common myths about sleep

- Contrary to popular belief, we don't all need 8 hours' sleep. For some people, 5 or 6 hours may be sufficient: Other people may need much more. Babies and teenagers generally sleep more than adults; older people less
- For those of us who are over 30, it's quite normal to wake up several times during the night; we may not even remember that we have done so

Tips on improving sleep

- If stress, anxiety or depression are keeping you awake, Oasis-Talk can provide courses or 1:1 therapies to help you improve your mood
- If you feel that a physical health condition or your medication are affecting your sleep, you might want to consult your GP or other health professional to see what support is available
- Small changes to your sleeping environment can pay big dividends; for example, putting up blackout blinds; getting earplugs or a sleep mask; changing your mattress or pillow
- Try to keep computers and other devices out of your bedroom. Light from screens can convince your "internal clock" that it's daytime, and the information you are absorbing will stimulate your brain and keep you awake
- Try cutting out caffeine and/or sugary foods after lunchtime; they create energy spikes that may affect your sleep. Caffeine is a diuretic, so you may need to get up more frequently to go to the toilet during the night
- Try not to use alcohol to relax: You may drop off to sleep faster, but the quality of your sleep will be affected and you may experience broken sleep
- Our body clock loves regularity. Wherever possible, see if you can get up and go to bed at the same time each day
- If you have a clock in your bedroom, turn the clock face away from you. If you can see the time, you're more likely to worry about still being awake. We tend to remember the times we were awake and checked the clock, even if we were asleep in between!
- Challenge your thinking: We often overestimate the impact that a poor night's sleep will have on our performance the next day. This creates more anxiety, and keeps us awake as the tension builds. Oasis-Talk's workshops based on CBT will teach you how to change your mood by changing your thinking
- Learn relaxation skills to release physical tension. Our relaxation workshops can help you do this, or you can try the resources on our self-help page
- Healthy sleep isn't just about the night-time; it's very much affected by what we do during the day. If you aren't sleeping well, think about how you can best manage your energy during the day – which may include some down-time
- If you need more in-depth support managing sleep problems, check out our Sleep Management workshops or 1:1 therapies