



**EMPLOYEE HEALTH &  
WELLBEING SERVICE**  
Occupational Health  
Occupational Physiotherapy  
Employee Wellbeing

## Sleep

Sleep is an important part of our lives. Sleep problems – even quite mild ones – can damage your wellbeing and quality of life. Trying some of these tips may help you to get the sleep you need.

The [Centre for Clinical Interventions](#) provides free, accessible information sheets and worksheets for sleep, improving sleep hygiene, insomnia and nightmares.

The [NHS website](#) provides information on the effects of tiredness and fatigue and how to get to sleep. There is also information on understanding sleep problems and additional resources [here](#).

NHS staff have been given free access to apps such as ‘Headspace’ and ‘Calm’. Headspace provides sleep casts, music, and other unique audio experiences to create the conditions for a more restful night’s sleep. Find out about the apps you can access [here](#), and [here](#).

The [Employee Wellbeing Service](#) website also has a wide range of resources to help with common mental health difficulties which may be impacting upon your quality of sleep, such as, anxiety.

### **Sleep Hygiene**

Healthy sleep habits can make a big difference in your quality of life. Having healthy sleep habits is often referred to as having good [sleep hygiene](#). Try to keep the following sleep practices on a consistent basis:

1. **Keep a regular sleep routine** – wake up at the same time each day, weekends included.
2. **Get regular exercise each day**, preferably in the morning
3. **Get regular exposure to outdoor or bright lights**, especially in the early afternoon.
4. **Keep the temperate in your bedroom comfortable.**
5. **Keep the bedroom dark enough to facilitate sleep.**
6. **Keep the bedroom quiet** – try thicker curtains, sleeping at the back of your house or even earplugs to avoid being woken by noise.
7. **Only use your bedroom for sleep, sex and getting dressed.**
8. **Give yourself 1-1.5 hours to wind down before going to sleep** – use this time to process the day’s events, write a to-do list for the next day or do something relaxing.
9. **Try muscle relaxation to help destress and unwind**, e.g. a warm bath or progressive muscle relaxation (PMR).
10. **If you lie in bed awake for more than 20-30 minutes, get up, go to a different room, participate in a quiet activity, then return to bed when you feel sleep. Repeat, as needed.**

### **Winding down**

Winding down is a critical stage in preparing for bed. There are lots of ways to relax:

- A warm bath (not hot) will help your body reach a temperature that's ideal for rest
- Writing "to do" lists for the next day can organise your thoughts and clear your mind of any distractions
- Relaxation exercises, such as light [yoga stretches](#), help to relax the muscles. Do not exercise vigorously, as it will have the opposite effect
- Relaxation CDs work by using a carefully narrated script, gentle hypnotic music and sound effects to relax you
- Reading a book or listening to the radio relaxes the mind by distracting it
- There are a number of apps designed to help with sleep. See [the NHS apps library](#)
- Avoid using smartphones, tablets or other electronic devices for an hour or so before you go to bed as the light from the screen on these devices may have a negative effect on sleep

### **Sleep Diary**

Identifying details about habits that affect sleep can show patterns that help explain sleeping problems. To keep the most accurate sleep diary, fill it out carefully every day. Many sleep diaries contain one short section to complete in the morning and another in the evening.

Keep your sleep diary and a pen in an easily accessible place where you'll be reminded to fill it out every day.

**Free downloadable sleep diary [here](#).**

### **Stress**

Stress can make it more difficult to fall asleep and stay asleep. That's because it puts you in a state of hyperarousal, causing your blood pressure and your breathing rate to increase. The key to combatting stress: relaxation. For more information on stress and worry, go [here](#) and [here](#).