

Sleep Tips for Students

How we feel during our waking hours depends a lot on how well we sleep at night. If you get good sleep, you stay productive, think logically, retain information and remain energetic and emotionally balanced. When we get run down our immunity is reduced and we become more susceptible to infections like colds & flu and mental issues like stress, anxiety. Students sometimes suffer with physical & mental symptoms of exhaustion.

Sleep quality is largely dependent on lifestyle choices and most people, at some point in their lives, suffer from insomnia. Addressing sleep problems in the early stages can help enormously. The solutions are often simple and easy to implement. Students can improve their sleep if they following these 10 tips:

1. **No Stimulants** two hours before sleep: tea, coffee, cigarettes and some colas & chocolate, exercise also acts as a stimulant & should be avoided 2-3 hours before sleep.
2. **Bedtime Routine** Go to bed at the same time each night & stop working at least an hour before sleep, relax for 30 minutes before getting into bed. Try TV, magazines, light reading, bath, shower, meditation, relaxing music, yoga etc. Try this free app: <https://www.headspace.com/headspace-meditation-app>
3. **Leave your worries with your toothbrush** you can pick both up in the morning. This may be difficult at first but most students can control their thought processes with practice. Replace repetitive anxious thinking with relaxing, soothing thoughts or try writing down your worries. Anxious thinking produces adrenaline that delays sleep.
4. **Comfort** - make sure you are comfortable in your sleeping environment (bed, linen, temperature, lighting, noise). Sharing a single bed will hinder sleep.
5. **Drink alcohol in moderation** & avoid eating large meals late at night as the digestive process delays sleep but do not go to bed hungry.
6. **Avoid consecutive late nights**. The body takes several hours to reach the deep level needed for rejuvenating sleep, therefore going to sleep after midnight will reduce overall quality of sleep.
7. **Get up early** 7-8am so you are tired at night – establish a regular routine and do not sleep during the day, even if you have had a late night.
8. **Don't lie awake** for ages in the dark, it is best to get up, go to the loo, have a drink or read then try again after 10-15 minutes, repeat this process if you wake in the night.
9. **No electronic devices** ½ hour before bed as this has been shown to delay the onset of sleep.
10. **Maintain a regular routine** - sleep & eat at the same time each day and avoid an erratic lifestyle. Our bodies have a natural 24-hour circadian rhythm which affects hormone balance and works best if a regular daily routine is repeated. Most research suggests humans need 7-8 hours' sleep a night. Fresh air & exercise during the day can aid sleep quality.

Did you know that the Oxford Counselling Service run free sleep workshops?

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/counselling/workshops?wssl=1>

They also have short sleep podcasts to listen to.

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/counselling/selfhelp/podcasts?wssl=1>

This is an excellent sleep booklet:

<https://web.ntw.nhs.uk/selfhelp/leaflets/Sleeping%20Problems%201%20Opt%202016%20FINAL.pdf>

Remember, even relaxing in bed helps the body rejuvenate, try not to get anxious and frustrated about insomnia, feeling tense aggravates the problem. The more you worry about getting to sleep the less likely you are to drop off.

If things do not improve, keep a sleep diary and seek support.

Please contact the College Doctors or the College Nurse.

College Doctors: 01865 311234 <http://www.leaverandpartnersjericho.nhs.uk/>

Further reading

<https://patient.info/health/insomnia-poor-sleep>

<https://www.bupa.co.uk/health-information/mental-health/sleepingwell>

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/sleep/getting-better-sleep.htm>