Riding the sleep wave
Sleep + Young People

Sleep Helps

We sleep so we can be active, focused and feel good during the day. Almost everyone has had a bad night's sleep and knows what it feels like…

We know that young people are more likely to experience problems with their sleep because of all the changes occurring in adolescence.

Everyone is different, and our need for sleep changes over time. What's important is finding a balance that allows us to get the sleep we need as well as achieve our goals and have fun during the day.

SO… what's the right balance for you?

How can you learn to take charge of your sleep and feel in control? Read on…

What's your balance and how do you learn to get it right?

Adolescence and Sleep… The sleep of 15–25 year olds

Sleep is super important and it changes during adolescence.

As you enter adolescence, natural hormone changes shift your **body clock** and cause changes to your sleep patterns. Your body clock regulates many of your body's patterns, including when you sleep and when you wake up.

It's normal to want to go to bed later than you used to, but the amount of sleep you need actually **increases** at this time.

Making sure you get enough sleep can be tricky, but it's important to find the right balance so you can be alert and energetic during the day and feel good about yourself.

Whilst the ideal amount of sleep will vary from person to person, if you find you are:

> feeling tired in the mornings or after lunch
> having difficulty concentrating and remembering things
> feeling more irritable than usual
> feeling less energetic

You're probably not getting enough sleep. Sleep deprivation can become like a vicious cycle that is often avoidable.

Our basic sleep / wake cycle impacts all aspects of our life. Sleep affects our physical health, our learning and concentration, our activity levels, emotions and relationships.

Relaxation Skills – Coping with Stress

Learning to relax is an important life skill and can help to improve your sleep.

It may sound simple, but learning to breathe in a calm and controlled way is an easy relaxation strategy that you can use before you go to bed or if you wake up in the night and find it hard to fall back to sleep.

Think waves, rhythmic sounds lapping on a beach… see it… breathe the sound out through your mouth… give it a go!

relax & breathe…

1. While sitting or lying down, make yourself as comfortable as possible.

2. Take a deep breath and let it out slowly. Repeat this once.

3. Close your eyes. Focus your mind on breathing.

4. Breathe easily and gently with no effort.

5. Breathe in steadily over 3 seconds.

6. As you breathe out steadily over 3 seconds, say to yourself 'relax' while letting all your muscles go loose and floppy.

7. Keep repeating this in a 6 second cycle (3 seconds in and 3 seconds out) over and over until you find yourself feeling calm and relaxed.

TIP: Long sleep-ins on the weekend to catch up on sleep make your body clock think you are jet lagged – and the effects can last for days. Getting up at a similar time every day can help to avoid this, and will make it easier to fall asleep at the right time.

Getting the balance right…

What helps & what doesn't?

What can prevent a good nights sleep?

> **Loud music or TV, emails, homework, too much stress**

> **Exercise right before sleep**

> **Feeling hungry**

> **Computer screens left on** – they have a type of light that keeps you awake. Try shutting down the computer an hour before you want to sleep.

> **Messed up body clock** – different wake and sleep times and no routine.

> **Caffeine** – poor sleepers should have less or no caffeine.

> **Nicotine and Alcohol** – smoking tobacco is a stimulant and can make your dreams more vivid and make it harder to fall asleep. Alcohol does not help sleep. It can make you drowsy but the sleep you get is more likely to be disrupted and you'll wake up worse off.

> **Some medications & other drugs** – speak to your doctor for more information.

What can PREVENT a good nights sleep?

FACT: **When the amount of sleep you get varies a lot from day to day, it can cause poor sleep.** Not sleeping well can cause more stress or moodiness. It can tip your balance and make you feel worse about yourself and others.

TIP: If you find yourself wanting to be in bed and sleeping too much of the day, get it checked out. See your GP or talk to your health care provider. *For more general info visit the websites below:*

Teenage sleep: Understanding and helping the sleep of 12 – 20 year olds at http://eprints.vu.edu.au/467/

> www.ybblue.com.au
> www.reachout.com
> www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

What can HELP a good nights sleep? (self-care tips)

Create your own relaxing bedtime routine to program your body clock:

> **Ensure you're not too hot or too cold.** Maintaining a constant body temperature will help sleep.
  - **Keep your feet at the right temperature** by putting on or taking off socks.
  - **Have a warm drink.** Milk contains amino acids that can make you drowsy, and camomile tea can also help with sleep.

> **Create a sleep space that works for you** – quiet, dark, less cluttered.

> **Do relaxing activities in order to wind down**
  - these might include reading or listening to music softly.
  - a warm bath or shower can help to make you feel sleepy.

> **Turn off your computer an hour before you go to sleep.**

Kick start your day:

> **Wake up around the same time every day and catch the morning sun.** Waking up with sunlight is important to restart your body clock and help your brain switch on.

> **Try to get out of bed when you wake up** rather than going back to sleep.

> **Get out in the fresh air and do some exercise.** Even if it feels difficult, this will help you to wake up and improve your sleep the next night.

While you're out and about:

> **Stay off caffeine after midday** or if you're sensitive try to cut it out altogether.

> **Write a journal** to get out all the important thoughts, worries or events from the day.

> **Try not to nap unless you're tired.** If you do nap, keep it short.

Don't stress if you find yourself waking up in the night. It's actually pretty normal, and worrying about getting back to sleep will probably keep you up longer. Try to relax and wait for the next wave of sleepiness to arrive, and if you find yourself staring at the clock try turning it around.

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