The Fircroft Trust

Helpful Guides

The Importance of
Sleep

We all need to get enough sleep. Most of us know this and try to follow it as a rule. Our brains and bodies work so hard during the day, more than we really know, and they deserve a rest at night.

Why is sleep important?

Sleep is your body's way of resting and replenishing itself. When you sleep, you're resting your brain after use, resting your muscles and joints from movement, and giving your body time to process chemicals without anything interfering.

Sleep is essential to most things in your body, particularly:

- Your mood and mental health
- Your ability to think clearly
- Your muscles
- Your involuntary organ function
- Your memory

Apart from a time to relax and unwind, sleeping is when we stop all our voluntary movements, meaning our body can do all of its necessary maintenance.

What happens when we don't get enough sleep?

You probably know that getting enough sleep is one of the best things you can do for your health. But what happens when we don't get enough sleep?

You may find that:

- Your mood worsens
- Existing health conditions get worse or don't improve
- You have less energy
- You don't think as clearly, or you forget things

Chronic lack of sleep can even cause susceptibility to illness and may contribute to stress-related conditions.

Tips for better sleep

Getting better sleep can improve most aspects of your health and make you feel happier and more alert. Here's how to improve your sleep at night and start feeling better:

Switch off

Blue light from screens can disrupt healthy sleeping patterns, particularly right before sleep. Try to spend half an hour or more away from screens before you want to go to sleep to help your brain switch off from the day.

Get into a routine

Some people find a lack of routine stressful, often hindering their sleep. Try to establish a routine aimed at destressing - have a warm (decaffeinated) drink, switch off from work, and put heavy topics to bed by having a bath, reading or doing some gentle stretching.

Take the pressure off

The pressure to fall asleep can be immense, especially if you have to work in the morning. This pressure isn't good for your ability to sleep, as it can make your mind more active and produce stress hormones which are not compatible with rest and sleep.

Read (with caution)

Some people swear by it; others swear off it. Reading can be really helpful for sleep, by tiring out your eyes and taking your mind off life stresses and digital screens. However, avoid reading that book with the biggest plot twist or anything scary or upsetting likely to disrupt your rest.

Meditate

Meditating is very useful for sleep because it encourages your mind to be silent and reflective. It's been shown to reduce heart rate and blood pressure, which is great for your health in general but particularly for rest and sleep. It can also help you to be more present, which is excellent for taking your mind off stress.

Eat and drink mindfully

Certain foods and drinks can affect how you sleep. While you might fall asleep more easily after drinking alcohol, this can disrupt your sleep. Additionally, some evidence shows that foods like cheese, sugary foods and caffeinated drinks are all detrimental to sleep.

Seek support

When sleeplessness becomes insomnia or otherwise affects your ability to function, it may be time to seek help. Reach out to your medical practitioner, or find information and support at The Fircroft Trust by contacting us.

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