

Sleep offers a multitude of health benefits, yet recent figures indicate that 40% of Australians are not getting adequate sleep. What can we do to improve our sleep?

Why is sleep so important?

Though sleep needs vary, it is recommended that adults get between 7 to 9 hours of sleep per night. It is not recommended that adults sleep less than 6 hours or more than 10 hours per night on a sustained basis.

Sleep is an active state, during which our bodies undertake critical repair activities. The benefits of sleep impact our cognitive, physical and emotional health in many ways:

Cognitive health benefits:

- Increasing concentration
- Improving memory
- Improving judgement and decision making which can also translate into decreased risk of accidents.

Emotional health benefits:

- Increasing your positive mood
- Improving stress response by regulating cortisol levels (stress hormone)
- Reducing irritability/anger
- Decreasing sensitivity to pain.

Physical health benefits:

- Reducing Fatigue and improving your energy levels
- Supporting your immune system and assisting your recovery from illness
- Supporting your metabolism: weight management
- Healthier eating behaviours
- Inclination to get more exercise due to increased energy levels (positive cycle).

Top tips to improve your sleep

Falling asleep can be hard. You cannot make yourself fall asleep – just like you can't digest your food faster. *We can only create the right conditions for sleep – both in our minds and in our environment.*

Below we focus on the top environmental factors to create good 'sleep hygiene', and overpage we deep dive into mindset strategies to support sleep quality.


- 1 Build a healthy sleep routine.** Try and stick to a regular time to go to bed and get up. This helps reinforce your body's natural sleep/wake cycle. *Keep the hour before bed as your wind down time*
- 2 Create a sleep 'sanctuary' (where possible).** Ensure your bedroom is dark, quiet and cool. Avoid TV or display devices in bed, or an hour prior to sleep.
- 3 Try and get some sunlight and fresh air each day.** This helps set up your natural circadian rhythms. Schedule time for outdoor breaks/a walk outside.
- 4 Reduce Stimulants.** Caffeine, tobacco and energy drinks are best limited, especially from mid-afternoon. Increase water intake instead.
- 5 Expend some physical energy in the day.** Exercise (but not within 2 hrs of bedtime) has been shown to promote natural feelings of tiredness and may support more time in deep sleep
- 6 Moderate your alcohol intake.** Excess alcohol prior to sleep interferes with REM sleep, delaying the onset and shortening the duration. You may *feel it relaxes you into sleep –but your quality of restful sleep is compromised.*
- 7 Avoid late naps.** While brief (10 to 15 minute) power naps may be beneficial, avoid naps in the second half of the day, as they may interfere with your sleep cycle.

Source: Bupa sleep webinar May 2022

Useful links

[Good sleep habits](#)

[Sleeping tips when staying indoors during isolation period](#)



"Sleep recalibrates our emotional brain circuits, allowing us to navigate next-day social and psychological challenges with cool-headed composure."

Matthew Walker PhD, professor of neuroscience and psychology at UC Berkeley

Mindsets and mindfulness

To master the art of sleep, it is absolutely vital that we master our own thoughts.

The mistake many of us make, particularly during our attempts to sleep, is to get locked in a battle with our own mind. But it need not become a battle at all.

The key is to be patient and gradually introduce some simple practices and mindsets that will help prepare the mind for a good night's sleep.

Reframe your sleep 'problem'

People who experience sleep problems tend to over-worry about their lack of sleep, which can create a negative spiral. Mindfulness can help! Start with observing your thought patterns. Try to cultivate 'being' mode, rather than framing your thoughts in 'doing' mode. Connect with the present moment, acknowledge and allow things to be as they are, being open to all emotions whether pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.



What else can help my mindset at bedtime?

Be kind to yourself.

Getting into healthy sleep patterns can take time, so don't be hard on yourself, permit some leeway as you try to adjust to your new routine. If you're lying awake after 15-20 minutes, rather than thinking self-punishing thoughts, try a change of scene getting up and performing a small task like reading a book, noting down your thoughts, or go for a walk around the house then return to bed. De-catastrophise. Try re-framing any negative thoughts to 'I may not get a full nights sleep tonight, but that's ok. I've handled it before, I can handle it again. I am focussed on long term gains'.

Dial down your stress levels.

Stress can keep us awake. Be mindful of stressful situations you are facing, and try to put in place some support mechanisms to handle key stress points (e.g. draw on our EAP support, talk to your manager).

You can try to reflect on a helpful one-liner or 'mantra' before bed-time that can help you set aside your stresses and create the space for rest. A 10 minute mindfulness track can help act as a 'circuit breaker' for stress and calm the mind before bedtime.

"I give myself permission to close my eyes tonight, and awake refreshed tomorrow. I am allowed to drift into a good night's sleep. My body, mind and soul are worthy of their rest"

A sleep affirmation by Jennifer Williamson, in 'Sleep Affirmations: 200 phrases for a deep and peaceful sleep'

Practice gratitude.

Research suggests that reflecting positively and thankfully on what's been going well for you helps improve sleep and reduce the likelihood of negative thoughts and worry when falling asleep. Try making a habit of asking yourself "what 3 things went well today?"

Try note-taking or journaling.

For some people, writing in a journal can help unburden the mind of 'chatter' and repetitive thoughts. E.g write down things you need to do or say the next day before lying down for bed.