



Sleep

Sleep is so important for many things, such as helping us grow, learn and stay healthy. Teenagers need 8 to 10 hours sleep a night (honest, I didn't make that up!). You wouldn't forget to charge your phone at night, so don't forget to charge your body and mind with a proper sleep (cheesy, I know!). Not enough sleep can increase depression, poor memory, moodiness and anxiety but worrying about this can make it even harder to sleep! So what can you do?

Here's some tips, I know you'll have tried many of them before but maybe not all of them. So please give them a go for a couple of weeks and see if it makes a difference.

1. Stick to a sleep routine which means going to bed at the same time each night and waking up at the same time every day, even on the weekends (ok, I know that's not realistic but try not to stay in bed too long at weekends). This helps to regulate your body's clock and could help you fall asleep and stay asleep for the night. Set your alarm and GET UP!
2. Practice a relaxing bedtime routine. Chill out, try not to have bright lights on after 8pm (just use a lamp if you have one rather than the main ceiling light). Watch TV (nothing too scary or exciting!), read a book or a magazine, do some colouring in, listen to music, have a bath whatever you like to do to chill out. If you have things to remember for the next day, write them down so you don't need to worry about them while you're trying to sleep.
3. Now...this is the hard one! Turn your phone off an hour before bedtime (I'm not kidding ☺). If you really must use your phone as an alarm, an hour before bedtime turn it to silent, set your alarm then put it at the other side of your room away from your bed so that when it does go off you can't hit the snooze button (I know you!). I know it's horrible having to get out of bed to switch it off but once you're up... there's no point going back to bed (don't do it!!). The light on phones and laptops is similar to sunlight and it tricks the body into thinking it's daytime, your brain then shuts down your sleep hormone melatonin which means you won't sleep so well. So your brain thinks it's the middle of the day when you're scrolling through Snapchats or Tik Toks at 11pm (check me being down with the kids, knowing the Apps ☺) so no wonder you can't sleep. Please try to turn it off an hour before bedtime, even for a week and see if it makes a difference. If you absolutely can't turn your phone off at night (and I know you can!), put on the night setting so the light is less bright, turn it to silent (the alarm still works) and never sleep with it under your pillow!
4. Exercise daily. Even a little bit of exercise, like going for a walk is better than no activity. Exercise outdoors is best but any type of exercise is great just not right before bed.
5. Don't go to bed until you feel tired and sleepy, this is very important, even if it means you're going to bed later than you think you should. If you normally go to bed at 10pm but don't fall asleep until midnight, start going to bed at midnight, you should only need to do this for 2 or 3 nights and then you can gradually start going to bed slightly earlier and within a week or two you should be back going to bed at 10pm again but this time falling asleep more quickly.
6. Have your room as dark and quiet as possible.
7. Don't have food or drink containing caffeine after 5pm so no tea, coffee, energy drinks or chocolate (sorry!)
8. Try really hard not to have a nap during the day. Sometimes school or life can be hard and it's tempting to have a wee snooze when you get in but it makes it so much harder to sleep at night so try to keep busy and awake until bedtime.
9. Be grateful. Write down 3 things you are grateful for every night. It might just be that it was sunny, or you saw the girl/boy you fancied in school, whatever it is, write them down (I know it sounds weird, but try it!)
10. Tidy your room. Boring but true, you're more likely to sleep better in a tidy room. You're also less likely to fall over and break your leg if you get up to pee in the night.

Most teenagers find it difficult to get enough sleep at some point so don't worry, you are not alone. This website has some great advice on sleeping www.sleepscotland.org but if you are still struggling to sleep, please speak to your doctor.