

# IMPROVING SLEEP

## WHAT IS SLEEP HYGIENE?

Sleep hygiene refers to daily habits, routines, and practices that can influence the quality of our sleep. There are many factors that contribute to good sleep hygiene, such as exercise, diet, environment, and technology use, and they contribute to our quality of sleep throughout the whole day, and not just before we go to bed at night.



## WHY IS SLEEP IMPORTANT?

There are lots of reasons for why we sleep, and why it is important for us to get a good night's sleep. When we sleep, the cells in our body are able to repair and restore themselves, this includes the cells in our brain. When we have had a good night's sleep, our brain functions better which means our concentration, focus, learning, and problem solving skills are much better. The brain also controls our thinking and emotions and so when we are rested, we feel more positive emotions, we respond to emotional situations better, we have less negative thoughts, and our memories get processed which helps us to remember and retain memories and information. Over time, poor quality sleep can lead to the development of mental health difficulties.

Good quality sleep also has huge impact on our body as it improves immune function, repairs cells, reduces the risk of injury, infection and disease, and helps us to feel energised and coordinated. When our sleep quality is low, we find that we are more prone to coughs and colds, and we feel tired and clumsy, for example.

Sleep affects both our mental and physical health, and also our daily functioning, and so it is incredibly important to make sure we are getting enough sleep, and that the quality of the sleep is good.

## HOW DO I KNOW WHEN MY SLEEP NEEDS IMPROVING?

You may need to make changes if you notice any of the following: feeling tired often; getting less than 8 hours of sleep; struggling to get to sleep; waking up in the night; struggling to get up in the morning; going to bed at different times every night; struggling to focus at school; difficulty retaining information; feeling ill often; and feeling more emotional than usual, for example.



# TOP TIPS TO IMPROVE SLEEP HYGIENE

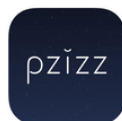
- 1 **Create a bed time routine and stick to it.** Working out what time you need to go to bed at night and wake up in the morning will ensure that you get enough sleep, and help you to create a routine. Over time, you will naturally go to sleep and wake up at the same times without the help of alarms.
- 2 **Create a sleep friendly environment.** Is your bed comfortable? Is your bedroom tidy? Is it too cold or too hot? Is it dark enough? Is your bed clear of clutter? Is it quiet? Are your devices switched off?
- 3 **Stop using technology at least 30 minutes before bed time.** This includes phones, TV's, iPad's, games consoles, Kindles, and music devices. Try putting your phone on "night mode" a couple of hours before bed. If you need to keep your mind busy at this time, try reading a book, drawing or colouring, having a bath, meditating, or talking to someone at home.
- 4 **Your bed is for sleeping.** Your brain associates your bed with bed time and so if you are in your bed before your allocated bed time, then the routine that you created becomes undone. Try doing your homework at the kitchen table, watching TV on the sofa, or reading on a bean bag, instead of on your bed, for example.
- 5 **Live a healthy lifestyle.** Eat a regular balanced diet, move your body regularly, avoid sugary foods in the evening, reduce caffeine intake, socialise with friends and family, and engage in self-care.
- 6 **Avoid naps in the day.** Napping during the day negatively affects your sleep routine, and you will find it harder to get to sleep at night. If you find that you are more tired than usual, then you can go to bed half an hour earlier instead of having a nap.

## WHERE CAN I FIND MORE SUPPORT?

### USEFUL WEBSITES:

[www.YoungMinds.co.uk](http://www.YoungMinds.co.uk)  
[www.TeenSleepHub.org.uk](http://www.TeenSleepHub.org.uk)  
[www.Kooth.com](http://www.Kooth.com)

### USEFUL APPS:



Pzizz  
(4+)



Chill Panda  
(4+)



Mindshift  
(12+)



Smiling Mind  
(3+)

**IF YOU FEEL UNABLE TO MANAGE YOUR SLEEP DIFFICULTIES ON YOUR OWN, YOU CAN SPEAK TO A TRUSTED ADULT AT SCHOOL ABOUT FURTHER SUPPORT.**

