

Good sleep is essential to mental and physical health, and is so much more than just being unconscious. Whilst we are asleep we are storing the day's experiences into our long term memory, clearing away unresolved emotions, repairing and refreshing the brain and the body. Most of these activities are restful. Dreaming, to clear emotions, uses a lot of energy.

After a good night's sleep you should **wake feeling refreshed**. If you wake feeling refreshed, even if you woke during the night, then you have had enough sleep. These days a lot of things interfere with our ability to get enough time to sleep well.



To get a good night's sleep - support your 'Sleep Makers'

Meet the 'Sleep Makers'

The brain and body will organise your sleep, and to do that reliably we need three main things to happen.

- * Our **internal clock** keeps us up during the day, and helps us fall asleep at night. It needs to be reset by every day by daylight in the morning, and darkness in the evening.
- * We need to let a **"sleepiness" signal** build up in the brain. It builds up all the time we are awake, but we block this signal with caffeine.
- * Lastly we need to be **relaxed enough** to fall asleep at night.

How do we (adults) support these three 'sleep makers'?

Starting in the morning

- ★ Get up at about the same time every day
- ★ Get out into bright natural daylight or bright artificial full spectrum light as early in the day as possible, certainly before noon.
- ★ This time early in the day may be the best time to exercise

... around the middle of the day ...

- ★ Have your last caffeinated drink (coffee, tea, coke) by midday
- ★ Avoid napping any later than 2pm
- ★ If at all possible get your exercise done by 3 hours before bedtime at the latest.

... and evenings

- ★ Make your evening meal a light meal, and try to eat it as early as possible.
- ★ Let it get dark(er) in the evening. This means not having lots of bright lights, particularly daylight full-spectrum lights. As the evening goes on this gets more and more important. TV, computer and phone screens are set to daylight light.
- ★ Stop using screens, smart phones, and watching TV at least an hour before bed, and preferably sooner.
- ★ Do something really relaxing, such as a bath or shower, stretching etc before bedtime.
- ★ Go to bed at a time that allows enough sleep opportunity (usually 8 hours) before your waking time.

If following as many of these tips as you can doesn't get you into a good sleep routine, or if you currently have very poor sleep, there are more tips, tricks and ideas in [Still Awake?](#)