cancer support scotland

A Better Night's Sleep

Right now many of us are feeling on edge, anxious, with up and down moods and finding it hard to sleep, this is completely understandable considering the situation we are currently in. Here are 7 tips for a better night's sleep;

Have a routine: Most adults need between 6 to 9 hours of sleep every night. Going to bed and getting up at roughly the same time every day will help programme your body to sleep better. Try to wake up at the same time every morning, while it may seem like a good idea to have a long lie and catch up on a bad night's sleep, if this is done on a regular basis it will end up disrupting your sleep routine.

Create a restful sleeping environment: Your bedroom should be a place for rest and sleep. Keep noise levels to a minimum and keep the temperature at a comfortable level. Ideally your bedroom needs to be dark, quiet, and tidy with a temperature between 18°C and 24°C. If there are factors out with your control such as noise from neighbours or street lights consider an eye mask or ear plugs.

Exercise during the day: Moderate exercise such as walking can help relieve tension, anxiety and stress. It should be done in accordance to the current government guidelines and earlier in the day if possible as exercise increases the body's adrenaline production making it more difficult to sleep if done just before bedtime.

Cut down on caffeine in the evening: Try to avoid tea, coffee and fizzy drinks as caffeine interferes with the process of falling asleep and can also prevent deep sleep. Instead you could try a warm milky drink or decaf tea and coffee.

Do not over-indulge or smoke before bed: Too much food or alcohol late at night can interrupt your sleep pattern. Alcohol may help you fall asleep but it will disrupt your sleep later on in the night as the effects of the alcohol wear off. You may also need to go to the toilet frequently or get up to drink water if you are dehydrated. Nicotine will also disrupt your sleep as it is a stimulant. People who smoke before bed take longer to fall asleep and wake up more frequently.

Wind down and relax before bed: Try to avoid watching TV or using your smartphones/tablets for an hour or two before bed, instead have a warm bath, listen to quiet music, do some gentle yoga to relax your mind and body or read a book. You may also wish to listen to Cancer Support Scotland's relaxation audios available on our website such as the calming peace relaxation script or a progressive muscle relaxation exercise, these can also help you to relax and unwind before bed.

Clear you mind: Try writing a 'to do' list for the next day, in doing so you will organise your thoughts and clear your mind of any distractions. Listening to a mindful body scan meditation will also help clear your mind before bed.

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