cancer support
scotland

Tips for Getting Back to Sleep

It is normal to wake as many as 6 to 8 times each night, a problem only occurs when you find it hard to drift back off to sleep. Considering the situation we are currently in, it is understandable that many people may be feeling on edge, anxious and having difficulties getting back to sleep if they wake during the night. Here are our top tips for helping you drift back off to sleep during the night.

- **Avoid Your Phone** - Avoid scrolling through social media or checking your emails. Not only might your interest be piqued, the blue light from your screen might make you further alert. You could try leaving your phone in a different room when sleeping so you are not tempted to look at it if you wake during the night.

- **Get Out of Bed** - Get out of bed and go to a different room and do a quiet, relaxing activity such as reading a book, listening to soft music or having a cup of decaf herbal tea. This will stop you creating a negative association between the stress of not sleeping and your bedroom. Try not to turn on too many lights and when you start to feel sleepy return to bed.

- **Cover Any Clocks** - Clock watching can cause stress and anxiety to build, constantly checking the time, how long you have been awake or how many hours you have left till morning. Try turning clocks to the wall or covering them over to reduce this stress and anxiety.

- **Don't Give It Attention** - Worrying about not sleeping will keep you awake. Try turning your attention away from not sleeping to something restful, such as imagining a relaxing place and paying attention to what you can see, hear, feel, touch, smell and taste in that place. It could be somewhere you have visited or always wanted to visit but you can do so in your imagination. Try Cancer Support Scotland's '*Calming Place'* Relaxation Script.

- **Practice Relaxing** - Progressive Muscle Relaxation is an excellent way to relax both your body and mind. Try this if you wake during the night and have difficulty getting back to sleep. The purpose is to become aware of any tension you are holding in your body and let go of this tension, replacing it with relaxation. You could try breathing into that particular area as you imagine tension leaving your body.

- **Put Worries Away** - If your mind starts racing when you wake, make a note of the thought and tell yourself you will deal with it in the morning. Don't start journaling, write the thought on paper and put it away, gently reminding yourself now it is time for rest.

- **Practice Mindfulness** - Don't get caught up in thoughts, just bring your attention back to your breath or how your body feels lying in bed. If your attention starts to drift, gently bring your attention back to your breath or your body. Try Cancer Support Scotland's *Focusing on Breath* audio to help you practice mindfulness. Don't give yourself a hard time if you have to do this several times, each time you bring your attention back you are doing something kind for yourself and your mind.

- **Follow Good Sleep Habits** - Follow Cancer Support Scotland's *tips for A Better Night's Sleep*. Cut down on caffeine, don't over-indulge before bed, create a restful sleeping environment, wind down and relax before bed, exercise during the day and try clearing your mind before bed. If you have not slept much the night before, try to resist the urge to sleep during the day. Try to keep to a regular time of going to bed and getting up so your body and mind get into a routine.

This self-help guide was brought to you through the experience built up from the professional staff team at Cancer Support Scotland.

www.cancersupportscotland.org