

# A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP



# A GUIDE TO A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

## What is insomnia?

It's an altered sleep pattern including some of the following features:

- Difficulty going to sleep
- Interrupted sleep – involuntary waking during the night
- Waking too early.

Insomnia is a very common complaint. It can occur at all ages and for a variety of reasons. If severe sleep deprivation or disruption occurs over a period of weeks or months, there could be an underlying medical problem such as sleep apnoea. Seek advice from your GP.

## Why do people have altered sleeping patterns?

- Difficulty getting to sleep may be due to what has happened during the day that may have left you feeling tense
- A quiet, comfortable bed often stimulates the brain to think of things that may have occurred in the past (people, places, etc.)
- Anxiety about problems and concern about the future may be dwelt upon in bed
- Sadness, anger and depression may also interrupt your normal sleep pattern.

## Other things that may affect sleep include:

- A strange bed or unfamiliar surroundings
- Noise or light pollution
- Caffeine intake, including chocolate and tea
- Alcohol consumption
- A heavy meal before bedtime
- Any pain or discomfort
- When an insomnia habit or pattern develops, it may be hard to alter but change is possible.



# FACTS ABOUT SLEEP

- Each of us need different amounts of sleep
- Some people feel that they do not sleep well at night when, in fact, they have had enough sleep
- Worrying about not getting enough sleep can make the problem worse
- Visions, voices and body-jerks are all normal events of falling asleep
- There are two phases of sleep, Rapid Eye Movement and Slow Eye Movement sleep. We can't influence how much of each we get, but generally the brain regulates the body's needs
- If you have lost sleep, generally the body adjusts by ensuring sufficient sleep on average over the week
- Some medication to aid sleep can cause dependency and may result in a hangover effect the next morning. Some may even cause confusion and unsteadiness
- Insomnia can be a symptom of an underlying problem (e.g., if pain, depression or illness go on for long periods, it's advisable to seek medical help)
- What works to remedy sleep problems for one person may not work for another.



# HOW TO HELP OVERCOME SLEEP PROBLEMS



It's a good idea to start to slow down and relax an hour or two before going to bed, so that the body recognises that it's tired. Using relaxation techniques can be helpful – one example is the tension and release method:

***Tense and stretch each part of your body, hold for a count of four and release, noticing the difference as you let go. Do this twice, starting at your feet and working up to the muscles of your face.***

People often find that when they are physically tired, they are more able to fall asleep. So some exercise each day is a good idea, even if it's just a walk for half an hour.

# ADD TO WHAT YOU ALREADY DO BY USING THE FOLLOWING LIST:

- Try to keep regular hours for going to bed and getting up – routine can really help
- Keep the bedroom airy and not too hot, but ensure sufficient warmth and comfort in bed
- Put all lights off and start to think of your breathing – gently in and out
- Have a hot drink before going to bed
- To associate bed with sleep rather than having an active brain, try getting out of bed if you're unable to fall asleep within an hour. Return to bed when you're sleepy
- Have a bath or a warm shower before bed
- Reduce or stop smoking
- Take regular meals during the day. Be sure to eat easily digestible foods in the evening, have a carbohydrate snack near bedtime if you're hungry
- Share any problems you have with others – do not bottle them up
- Write a list if you worry about forgetting things
- If anxieties come to you in bed, tell yourself “this is not the time to think about this” – imagine throwing your worries into a box and closing the lid
- Take regular day-time exercise (half an hour a day of being at least a bit out of breath is recommended for everyone, or one hour three times a week). Do not exercise too close to bedtime
- Try not to overdo things during the day so you become over-fatigued
- Cuddle your partner. Cuddling is relaxing but avoid in-depth conversations in bed. If you do not have a partner, try using a hot water bottle or blanket for comfort
- Think about having a regular massage to relieve muscle tension
- Try some aromatherapy and herbal remedies, with or without massage
- Go to bed with the belief that you are going to have a sound sleep
- Try reading to induce sleepiness (the more monotonous the better!)
- Consider replacing your mattress if it's old and uncomfortable
- Seek medical help for chronic pain, breathlessness or unaccounted for symptoms
- Ensure you have comfy pillows, bed covers and nightwear. Wear bed socks if you have cold feet
- Consider redecorating the bedroom if it has bright colours e.g., greens/blues are more relaxing than orange, red and yellow.
- Create pleasant, calming pictures in your mind (e.g., a favourite beach or a quiet garden). Or think about a starry sky as you lie in bed and switch the stars out one by one.
- Set sensible expectations – remind yourself that you will probably cope even if you have a bad sleep, or tell yourself that you will just see how things go rather than try and force sleep to happen.





## COMPLEMENTARY THERAPIES

**Essential Oils:** The ones that help with stress and induce sleep include Hops, Lavender, Lime flowers, Camomile, Passiflora, Rosemary and Valerian.

**Massage:** Add 4 drops of one of the above oil essences to 10 ml (2 teaspoons) of almond, olive or grape seed oil – mix thoroughly and massage into the skin – for example behind your ears, around the neck, chest and wrists. This is a 2% dilution and is suitable in most cases.

**In a bath:** Add up to 5 drops to a filled bath. Take care not to slip on getting out. As a room freshener: Add essential oils to pot-pourri or spray from a perfume bottle.

**Try joining a class:** For relaxation such as Thai Chi or Yoga. Or start an exercise class to encourage you to take regular exercise.

**Find an alternative therapist:** Indian Head massage, Swedish, Thai or Aromatherapy massage, Shiatsu, Reflexology or Reiki, all of which have been found to help people with sleep and other physical and psychological problems.

**Counselling and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy:** There are many ways that trained counsellors can help if personal problems persist and are causing distress. Counselling provides a safe and non-judgemental environment in which to explore and work on issues that impact on life.

# STUDENT COUNSELLING AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE



## How to make contact

The Counselling Service is based at the Library. Counselling is free and available to all registered students. Appointments are available on weekdays from 9.00am to 6.00pm throughout the year, you can book an appointment by emailing [counselling@abertay.ac.uk](mailto:counselling@abertay.ac.uk). Alternatively, speak to staff at the Support Enquiry Zone (SEZ) on level 1 of the Library.

The service also includes a Mental Health Nurse Advisor (RNHM) who can work with you if you're experiencing or are concerned about any diagnosed mental health issues.

The Student Counselling & Mental Health Service is open Monday to Friday, 9.00am -5.00pm all year round, except when the University is closed during the Christmas break. The University believes that all employees and students have the right to expect, and that it has a responsibility to ensure, that no individual will be disadvantaged as a consequence of their age; disability; gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins); religion or belief; sex; or sexual orientation.

## Contact:

Student Enquiry Zone (SEZ)  
Level 1, The Library Building,  
Abertay University,  
Bell Street, Dundee DD1 1HG

Tel: 01382 308 805

Email: [counselling@abertay.ac.uk](mailto:counselling@abertay.ac.uk)



## SLEEP FOCUSED WEBSITES

[bbc.co.uk/science/humanbody/sleep](http://bbc.co.uk/science/humanbody/sleep)

[sleep-apnoea-trust.org](http://sleep-apnoea-trust.org)

[talkaboutslepp.com](http://talkaboutslepp.com)



## ABERTAY UNIVERSITY WELLBEING APP

[apps.apple.com/us/app/abertay-university-wellbeing/id1477200459](https://apps.apple.com/us/app/abertay-university-wellbeing/id1477200459)

[play.google.com/store](https://play.google.com/store)

# USEFUL INFORMATION

## Useful Websites:

[studentsagainstd Depression.org](http://studentsagainstd Depression.org)

**Student Mental Health Website -**

[thinkpositive.scot](http://thinkpositive.scot)

## Self Help Resources:

Living life to the full - [l1ttf.com](http://l1ttf.com)

Mental Health Foundation website with excellent podcast downloads - [mentalhealth.org.uk](http://mentalhealth.org.uk)

## Helplines:

If you want to talk to someone about your emotional difficulties and are feeling despairing or suicidal there is help day and night.

You can contact:

### Breathing Space

[breathingspace.scot](http://breathingspace.scot)

Tel – 0800 838 587

### The Samaritans

[samaritans.org](http://samaritans.org) , Tel – 116 123

### Saneline

[sane.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/support/helpline](http://sane.org.uk/what_we_do/support/helpline)

Tel – 0845 678 000

### Give us a shout

TEXT '85258

Here for you 24/7

[giveusashout.org](http://giveusashout.org)



If you feel that you require an appointment as soon as possible, please email [counselling@abertay.ac.uk](mailto:counselling@abertay.ac.uk). Appointments are based on staff availability, but we will try to see you within a few days. If it is an emergency, please refer to the resources listed above for urgent support details.



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## ENQUIRIES:

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Level 1, The Library Building,  
Abertay University,

Bell Street, Dundee DD1 1HG

T: 01382 308805/01382 308833

E: [counselling@abertay.ac.uk](mailto:counselling@abertay.ac.uk)

## EQUALITY STATEMENT:

The University Equality Policy  
can be found at:

[abertay.ac.uk/about/theuni/diversity](http://abertay.ac.uk/about/theuni/diversity)