

## 🌙 Sleep Hygiene! What is it and why is it Important? 🌙

A topic that is often overlooked and does play an important role in our overall health and well-being is our sleep.

Did you know that roughly, **1 in 3 adults worldwide have insomnia symptoms**, and about 10% of adults meet the criteria for insomnia disorder (1). Without doing the math's that is billions of people.

And did you know that **you are more likely to die from lack of sleep than from not eating** 😬

Like breathing, sleep is a fundamental human requirement. It has even been said **one could survive for three times as long without food as one could without sleep** 😬

This is all super significant ...as not sleeping well can have critical and debilitating effects on our overall quality of life, including on our physical health, mental well-being and the quality of our relationships.

### 😴 WHY IS GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP IMPORTANT? zzz


**It is well known that sleep is an important biological function essential for life.** Did you know that while we sleep the body goes into recover and repair mode, which includes supporting brain development, cardiac function, and body metabolism.


**Getting enough sleep has many benefits. Some of which include ...**


- 😴 Getting sick less often
- 😴 Staying at a healthy weight
- 😴 Lower your risk for serious health problems, like diabetes and heart disease
- 😴 Reducing stress and improve your mood
- 😴 Thinking more clearly
- 😴 Improved learning and memory
- 😴 Getting along better with people
- 😴 Making good decisions and avoiding injuries -


for example, drowsy drivers cause thousands of car accidents every year


## SOME COMMON CONSEQUENCES OF INADEQUATE OR POOR-QUALITY SLEEP INCLUDE,


 **Impaired Emotional Regulation:** Sleep deprivation can affect our ability to regulate emotions effectively, leading to increased emotional reactivity, reduced patience, and difficulty managing stress. This can strain relationships and negatively impact our social interactions.


 **Daytime Mood Disturbances:** Poor sleep is often associated with mood disturbances such as irritability, mood swings, increased stress levels, and a higher risk of developing symptoms of anxiety and depression. Adequate sleep is crucial for maintaining emotional well-being and resilience.


 **Fatigue and Sleepiness:** Not sleeping well can lead to you feeling sleepy during the day, making it challenging to stay alert and concentrate during the day. This can be super frustrating and can impact on our performance at home, work or school, and can increase the risk of accidents and errors.

 **Impaired Cognitive Function:** Lack of sleep can affect our ability to stay focussed, to concentrate and problem solve. This too can be frustrating for us and others.

 **Weakened Immune System:** Sleep plays a vital role in supporting our immune system. Chronic sleep deprivation can weaken the immune response, making us more susceptible to infections, slower recovery from illnesses, and increased risk of chronic health conditions.

 **Increased Risk of Chronic Health Conditions:** Prolonged sleep disturbances are linked to an increased risk of various chronic health conditions, including obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and hypertension. Adequate sleep is essential for maintaining a healthy metabolism and overall physical health.

 **Decreased Libido and Sexual Function:** Inadequate sleep can affect sexual desire, performance, and satisfaction. Chronic sleep problems may contribute to a decreased libido and intimacy-related issues.

 **Increased Risk of Accidents and Injuries:** Fatigue and drowsiness resulting from poor sleep increase the risk of accidents, both on the road, in the workplace and at home. Reaction times may be slower, and decision-making abilities can be impaired, posing a safety risk to self and others.

**Given these facts Want to know how to improve your sleep?** 

**One way to Improve Your Sleep is To Improve Your Sleep Hygiene** 

## WHAT IS SLEEP HYGIENE? 🤔

Sleep hygiene refers to your everyday practices that contribute to healthy and restful sleep.

### Some key practices to improve your sleep hygiene can include:

#### 🕒 **Stick to a Consistent Sleep Schedule:**

Training your body to go to sleep and wake up at a somewhat regular time, without being rigid about it, is one of the best ways to improve sleep quality.

By establishing a regular sleep routine by going to bed and waking up at roughly the same time each day, even on weekends, helps to regulate your body's internal clock and promotes better sleep.

Find a time that works for you and stick to it.

This is important as your body will start to associate your bedroom as a place of sleep and rest – if it views it as a place for stimulation it will not settle and wind down as required for good quality sleep.

#### 🕒 **Keep your room clean and tidy: Impact of clutter.**

Going to bed when your bedroom is cluttered and messy can be a huge distraction before bed, it can also make you feel unsettled, seeing all the things around you that need completing can make it hard for you to switch off and let go.

#### 🕒 **Limit Stimulants and Food Intake:**

Avoid caffeine, nicotine, alcohol and large meals close to bedtime. Stimulants can disrupt your sleep pattern, while heavy meals can cause discomfort and indigestion, opt for a light snack if needed, but aim to finish eating at least a few hours before bed. Many people believe that alcohol supports them to sleep, but in fact alcohol disturbs sleep and impacts on the quality and length of sleep that can be achieved.

#### 🕒 **Disconnect from Digital Devices:**

Remove distractions like electronics that emit blue light, which can interfere with your sleep quality. The blue light emitted by smartphones, tablets, and computers can interfere with your sleep-wake cycle. Establish a technology-free zone in your evening routine to allow your mind to relax and prepare for sleep.

#### 🕒 **Embrace Regular Exercise:**

Engaging in regular physical activity is a great de-stressor that support great quality sleep, however, try to complete your workouts at least a few hours before bedtime.

Exercise can promote better sleep, but intense activity too close to bedtime may leave you in a heightened state, making it harder to fall asleep.

### **Manage Stress Effectively:**

High levels of stress and anxiety can greatly impact your sleep quality. Find healthy ways to manage stress, such as gentle exercise, practicing relaxation exercises. If necessary, seek support from professionals who can guide you through challenging times.


### **Ensure your bedroom is a sanctuary for sleep:**


Try to use your bed for only sleeping and intimate moments between you and your partner. Avoid having stimulating conversations in bed, especially trying to solve arguments or disagreements, this heightened state will make it difficult to let go and surrender to sleep. Also avoid, eating, watching TV, reading, working on your laptop, talking on the phone – all of these things will stimulate you and make it difficult for you to switch off.


### **Create a Relaxing Bedtime Ritual:**

A ritual is a series of actions that you do religiously, performed according to a set order.

Rituals when done consistently before bed, signal to your body and mind that it's time to unwind and prepare for sleep. Below are some suggestions that you can use to develop your own rituals:

 **Dim lightening:** Having dimmers in your bedroom to create mood lighting is a great way to wind down your senses and body. Don't just keep that practice to your bedroom, using dim lighting throughout your home 1 to a few hours before bed goes a long way towards settling your body and nerves if they have been activated during the day.

 **Candles:** lighting your favourite candles sometime before bed is a beautiful way to set an ambiance in your space that feels relaxing and settling. Be aware to not select candles with a lot of scent that can heighten your senses and not decrease them. Using electric candles can have the same effect.

 **Warm or cool your room:** Setting your room to a moderate temperature, i.e. not too hot and not too cold supports your body to settle before sleep. Imagine winding down and doing all your beautiful rituals before bed, only to spoil it by getting into a freezing bed. Nothing like the shock of cold to wake you up or being overly hot to keep you awake. A seasonal ritual can be changing the types of sheets and bedding you use. During winter you could use cosy flannel sheets and

a thick doona and during summer you can swap to light cotton and or bamboo sheets with a light cover.

🛏️ **Fold down your bed and use of lavender:** For those of you of an age such as mine, old school hotels use to have a turn down service. This is where hotel staff would come into your room 1 to 2 hours before bed and unstack pillows and turn down your bed covers so that when you were ready for bed you could get straight into bed without having to worry about anything else. A beautiful addition to folding down your bed could be spraying lavender or placing lavender on or under your pillow. Lavender is used to calm the nerves and supports sleep.

🧘 **Light exercises:** Gentle stretches at a regular time before bed are super supportive to connect you back to your body and quieten the mind.

**Note:** As mentioned previously, generally reading, listening to podcasts, and or watching shows before bed are not a great ritual to have as depending on the content of what you are reading, listening to, or watching can stimulate you instead of calming you.

By prioritizing sleep hygiene, and putting into action some or all of the above, you can unlock the door to increased sense of focus, vitality and well-being, all of which has a positive impact on you, your friends, family and colleagues.

### **Just for fun ... here are some insightful sayings about sleep:**

z<sup>z</sup> Sleep is the best meditation – Dalai Lama

A well spent day brings happy sleep – Leonardo Da Vinci 🌙

🛏️ Sleep is the golden chain that ties health and our bodies together – Thomas Dekker

Sleep is an investment in the energy you need to be effective tomorrow –Tom Roth 🌙

### **We even have everyday common sayings around the benefits of sleep, such as:**

🌙 Nothing like a good night's sleep

🌙 Nothing that a good night's sleep can't fix or make seem better

😊 Go to sleep you will feel better in the morning

**Disclaimer:** Not sleeping well can be caused due to physical and or mental reasons, please seek medical advice if your sleeping is or has become problematic to your physical or mental health.

#### **REFERENCES:**

1. <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/12119-insomnia>
2. <https://www.verywellhealth.com/can-sleep-deprivation-cause-your-death-3015067>