

## Why is sleep important?

It is important to get 10-11 hours of quality sleep each night because:

Sleep is important for the development of your body and brain and helps us grow properly.

Sleep helps your body to heal and repair appropriately.

Good sleep will help you feel refreshed and energised to get the most out of the day ahead!

Quality sleep will also boost your concentration, so you are able to learn new skills and take in new information.

Getting enough sleep helps to maintain a healthy weight and reduces cravings for healthier high sugar foods.

## Top tips for getting a good night's sleep

Which of these tips can you try to help you sleep better?

- ◆ **Have a regular routine of going to bed and getting up at the same time each day.** Our bodies respond well to regular routines and this supports our circadian rhythm - a natural, internal process that regulates our sleep-wake cycle.
- ◆ **Have some time to wind down before going to bed, away from bright lights and screens** - this could be reading a book, listening to relaxing music or having a bath. You will be more likely to have quality sleep if the mind and body are relaxed.
- ◆ **Keep active!** Regular physical activity during the day is a great way of reducing levels of stress hormones on the body to enable better sleep. Use our exercise tips to keep active such as creating your own home gym!
- ◆ **Avoid stimulants and foods or drinks high in sugar** such as chocolate, sweets and biscuits that can negatively affect sleep quality. Remember to consume these in moderation and not to eat them close to bedtime.

### Why is it important to avoid bright lights and electronic devices close to bedtime?

Bright lights, television, phones and other devices can have a negative impact on your sleep.

- Taking devices into your bedroom may mean you are using them past your usual bedtime, eating into your essential sleep time! Set a time limit to switch them off and put them away.
- Light from electronic devices is thought to delay the release of melatonin – the hormone that is important for us to get to sleep.
- Keeping your phone by your bedside will interrupt sleep if this makes a noise or alert during the night. Checking devices that emit light will cause the brain to 'wake up' and cause stress hormones to be released - disrupting sleep further and making it more difficult to get back to sleep.

Is there a new activity you could do to replace watching television or looking at your phone before bed?



## Help your body to relax.

This sheet will guide you through a couple of techniques to help your body to wind down and relax. Remember, giving yourself time to wind down before bed can support better quality sleep.



### Did you know...

Sleeping well helps improve our long-term memory.



## Progressive Muscular Relaxation (PMR)

- ◆ Lie on your back and close your eyes. Begin by relaxing your breathing – breathe in deeply through your nose, counting to 4, then slowly breathe out counting to 3.
- ◆ Now start with the face muscles – imagine you are biting hard on something, hold for a few seconds, now relax your jaw muscles. Try this again and feel the tension in your muscles start to release. Do the same thing scrunching up your nose.
- ◆ Next, begin to relax the muscles in your body. Stretch both arms up to the ceiling as high as you can, hold them there, then let them drop. Try this again.
- ◆ Now imagine you are gripping something in one hand, squeeze it very tight and hold for 5 seconds, then release. Repeat with other hand.
- ◆ Move to your tummy, squeeze it right in for 5 seconds, then let it all out and relax. Notice how it feels. Repeat a few times.
- ◆ Now use the muscles in your legs to squeeze the toes for 5 seconds. Now relax the toes and legs completely. Repeat.
- ◆ Now tense up your whole body for a few seconds before completely relaxing all your muscles. Enjoy how this feels and let your body feel heavy and sink into the bed.
- ◆ Reflect on how this technique felt. How do you feel now? Do you feel different to when you started? Did you notice the tension leave your body?

RELAXATION TECHNIQUE ONE



## Deep breathing technique

- ◆ Find a comfortable and quiet place to sit or lie down before you start. You may choose to close your eyes and imagine yourself in a relaxing place such as on a beach.
- ◆ Breathe in deeply and slowly through your nose, feeling your belly rise. Hold for 1-2 seconds, then slowly breathe out through your mouth feeling your belly deflate.
- ◆ Count to 5 to breathe in and back down to 1 to breathe out. Do this a few times to find your own calming rhythm.
- ◆ Try to deep breathe for 5 minutes to begin with or until you feel relaxed and calm.

RELAXATION TECHNIQUE TWO