

Meet Our Experts – Sleep

We all spend nearly one-third of our lives asleep, but do we really know the true importance of sleep to our overall health and wellbeing? Be sure to tune into our series of sleep events this October to learn about how this affects us, as well as tips and advice from our experts to ensure you get a good night's sleep.

55%

of people are not getting enough sleep*

200%

Adults over 45 years who sleep less than 6 hours a night are 200% more likely to have a heart attack or stroke than someone who's sleeping 7/8 hours a night**

80%

of long-term poor sleepers suffer from low mood and are 7 times more likely to feel helpless and alone***

1 in 5

GP consultations in the UK are due to the effects of tiredness and fatigue***

Why do we need sleep?

Sleep is a state we fall into to allow our bodies to rest and recover. This rest and recovery includes both psychological (shallow) and physiological (deep) stages. Both the quantity and quality of sleep we get impacts our health and wellbeing.



Weight management

Sleep deprivation is linked closely to weight gain. Quantity and quality of sleep affects the function of hormone levels which many physiological processes depend on.

- **Leptin affects the feeling of fullness and satisfaction after a meal**
- **Ghrelin stimulates appetite**

When you are sleep deprived your levels of leptin fall and ghrelin increase, making you feel hungrier and less satisfied by what you eat, causing you to eat more and, consequently, gain weight.



Physical activity

People who engage in regular exercise have fewer sleepless nights and typically fall asleep more easily. This is because exercise allows for smoother, and more regular transitions between the cycles and phases of sleep, improving sleep quality. Physical activity can also improve your mood and emotional health, decreasing anxiety and depression, to promote a restful sleep.



Muscle relaxation

Muscle relaxation is a necessary component of sleep. During REM (Rapid Eye Movement) respiratory muscles slow down, breathing rates and sleep muscles relax and temporarily paralyze – allowing the body time to recharge and replenish.



Dietary regime

For a good night's sleep, ensure that your last meal of the day is 3 hours before bedtime. During digestion your metabolic rate and body temperature increase, throwing off the internal stimulus for inducing sleep. By giving time to complete digestion, your body can then focus on healing and repairing during sleep. It will ensure your blood sugar isn't spiking in the middle of the night (thus waking you up).

What we eat affects our sleep



Foods can influence how restful our sleep can be. Use these tips when planning your meals to help ensure you wake up feeling refreshed.

Foods to help you sleep:



Tryptophan is an essential amino acid that helps the body produce serotonin, a neurotransmitter that helps promote relaxation and sleep. Significant amounts of tryptophan is found in turkey, milk, miso soup, eggs, nuts, figs, fish, bananas, dates and papayas. A glass of warm milk with honey is an old sleep remedy that works because of the tryptophan in the milk.

Foods that hinder your sleep:



Sugar stimulates the nervous system, so sugary desserts and sometimes even fruit after dinner can be enough to keep you awake.



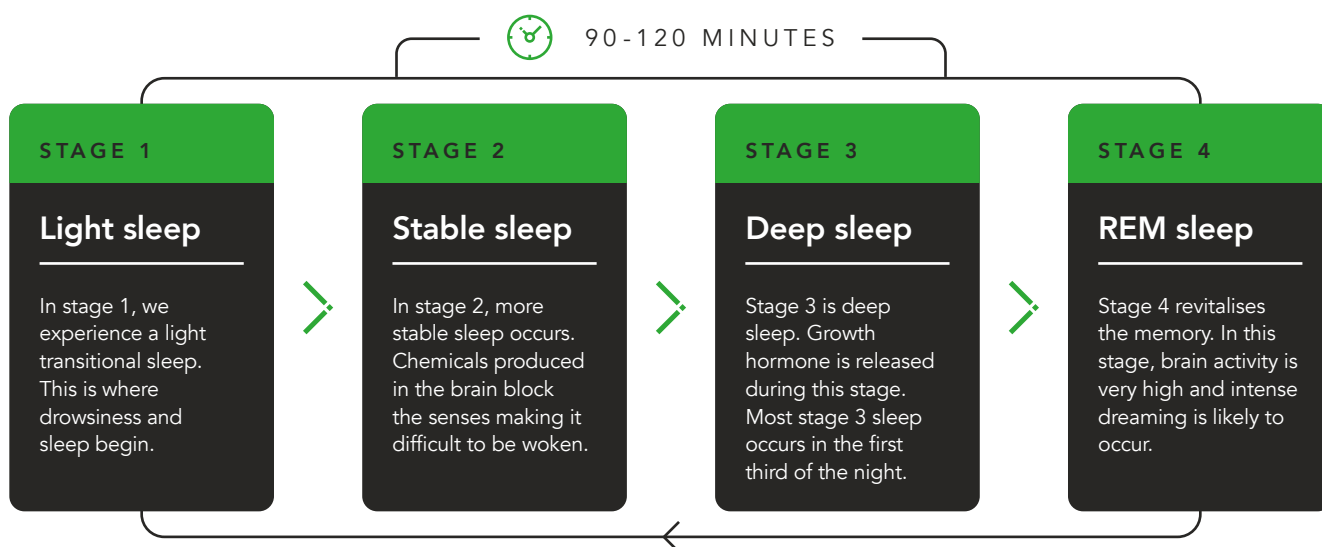
Caffeine and sugar stimulate the nervous system and should be avoided well before bedtime. Avoid food and drinks high in caffeine, like coffee, tea, cola and chocolate.



Tyramine triggers the release of the brain stimulant norepinephrine. Foods high in tyramine include bacon, cheese, chocolate, eggplant, ham, sauerkraut, sugar, sausage, spinach, tomatoes and wine. Avoid these foods close to bedtime if you can.

What happens while we're asleep?

SLEEP STAGES:



If you're keen to learn more about sleep, be sure to tune into our series of sleep events from 18-24 October.

Follow us on social for sleep tips and advice from our experts and contact your local centre to see how you can get involved.

Visit: nuffieldhealth.com/sleep for more information.