



## Wellbeing during the Coronavirus pandemic

### Sleep

Many people will be experiencing disturbed and interrupted sleep during this time. If you are one of them it can help to remember that you are not alone. Adjustments to new routines, working from home, stress, loneliness, family pressures, worry about money all contribute to sleep difficulties. The science of sleep disorders is a huge topic. This note provides a brief guide to a few remedies. It is not comprehensive. For an entertaining and much more detailed and scientific treatment read *Why We Sleep* by Matthew Walker.

- When to sleep and how – aim to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day. On average adult humans need about eight hours of sleep, ideally from approximately two hours before midnight until daylight. An afternoon (not evening) cat-nap has been shown to help learning and retention
- If you can't get to sleep – stay up, read a book, listen to music. Consider that you may simply not be tired yet. Avoid the temptation to work, watch tv or read the news online and avoid screens which emit blue light promoting wakefulness
- Insomnia, snoring, sleep apnoea – chronic conditions needing treatment ..... best to seek medical advice if these become an issue
- Diet – what you eat and when – foods containing tryptophan including eggs, cheese, nuts, fish and some teas (chamomile) produce melatonin and help sleep <http://sleepeducation.org/news/2020/03/10/five-foods-that-support-good-sleep>
- What you drink and when you drink it – Avoid alcohol and caffeine less than five hours before you go to sleep – including in black and green tea. Chamomile tea is good and promotes sleep
- Exercise – early in the day; vigorous exercise before bedtime can make getting to sleep harder
- Fresh Air – always good
- Work – try to stop work at least a couple of hours before you go to sleep. Avoid working in bed or in your bedroom if you can, especially at night
- Keep your bedroom as dark as possible, turn off all electrical and digital items, particularly screens which emit blue light
- Room temperature – Initiating sleep by core temperature dropping – a bath before bedtime, sleeping in a cooler room (18.5°C) is better, ideally with a slightly open window for fresh air flow. It is better to have



more and warmer bedclothes in a cooler room than few bedclothes in a warm room and it is especially important to allow your hands, feet and head to emit heat as you sleep

- Body temperature – a bath before bedtime is relaxing and by drawing blood to the surface of the skin it promotes the cooling of core body temperature which initiates sleep
- Bedding, mattress, pillows, sheets – as natural as possible, ideally pure cotton
- Essential oils and humidifiers – lavender helps, as does a degree of moisture in the air
- Meditation – clearing and calming your mind before you sleep
- Sound – calming apps are available online, and slow melodic music played through speakers or headphones can help with falling asleep
- Other intrusive noise – keep to a minimum as much as you can
- Sleeping tablets and melatonin – sedatives give the appearance of sleep but don't give truly restorative sleep, and can have unwanted side effects
- What to do if you wake up – don't stay in bed for longer than 10-15 minutes if you can't sleep. Get up and go to another room and do something relaxing like reading a book (not a screen) or listening to music

#### Useful links

Matthew Walker - Why We Sleep: Unlocking the Power of Sleep and Dreams

<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/35011549-why-we-sleep>; and responses to readers' questions

[https://sleepdiplomat.wordpress.com/#\[17\]](https://sleepdiplomat.wordpress.com/#[17])

National Sleep Foundation <https://www.sleepfoundation.org>

Center for Human Sleep Science <https://www.humansleepscience.com/p-u-b-l-i-c-a-t-i-o-n-s>

American Sleep Association <https://www.sleepassociation.org/about-sleep/>

American Academy of Sleep Medicine <https://aasm.org>

Healthy sleep habits <http://sleepeducation.org/essentials-in-sleep/healthy-sleep-habits>

Sleep medications <http://www.darksideofsleepingpills.com>

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2020/mar/22/regulate-your-breathing-and-four-other-ways-to-sleep-when-youre-anxious>

Children (warning: explicit) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cb0t9TUNLpg>



Useful sleep quiz from the American Academy of Sleep Medicine

		Rarely/ Never (0)	Sometimes (1)	Usually/ Always (2)
<u>S</u> atisfaction	Are you satisfied with your sleep?			
<u>A</u> lertness	Do you stay awake all day without dozing?			
<u>T</u> iming	Are you asleep (or trying to sleep) between 2:00 a.m. and 4:00 a.m.?			
<u>E</u> fficiency	Do you spend less than 30 minutes awake at night? (This includes the time it takes to fall asleep and awakenings from sleep.)			
<u>D</u> uration	Do you sleep between 6 and 8 hours per day?			

