



Community Pharmacy
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Sleep

A good night's sleep is essential for good health and wellbeing. It not only refreshes the mind, but gives the body time to repair and heal itself. While you are sleeping, your brain is preparing for the next day by forming new pathways to help you learn and remember information.

A lack of sleep will alter activity in certain parts of the brain. When you haven't had enough sleep, your judgement is impaired, reaction time slows down and your mood can be low and irritable. For a young man trying to juggle school and football and wanting to excel on the field and help their team to victory, it is crucial then to ensure we are all getting enough sleep.

A guide for teenagers is to try and get 9-10 hours of sleep a night. For adults 7-9 hours. Even 8 hours of sleep a night can increase your ability to solve complex problems by 50%.

So let's ask ourselves how much sleep are we actually getting?

So it's all well and good to say we need more sleep, but how can we realistically try and achieve this?

The following are some tips for good sleep hygiene, to ensure that the sleep you are getting is quality and to try and establish a good sleep pattern.

Obey your body clock!

- Try and get up at the same time (or around the same time) every day, even on weekends. This sounds hard, but if you're having trouble sleeping this routine will soon reset your body clock and you will find that you start to feel tired about the same time every night
- Don't ignore it when you do feel tired. Go to bed when your body is telling you it's ready
- On the flip side, don't try and go to bed if you don't feel tired, this will lead to bad habits such as lying in bed awake

A big threat to our body clocks these days are our mobile devices, such as iPads, phones, computers, tablets, etc

Cortisol is a hormone that peaks in the morning when the sun comes up and slowly drops off at night when the sun goes down. This is why we naturally wake up in daylight and start to feel tired when the sun goes down. If we are constantly looking at our screens this can trick the body into thinking it's still daylight and the body begins to release ore cortisol, which naturally keeps us awake and alert. So to get a good night's sleep, its recommended to have at least half an hour before bed with no screen time, to help our body register it's time to sleep.

Improve your sleeping environment –

- Invest in a good mattress, that is neither too soft or too hard for you
- Make sure the temperature in the room is right
- Ensure the room is dark enough
- Don't use the bedroom like a second lounge room. Keep the bed for sleeping. Watch TV, read books etc, in another room, so that your brain associates the bedroom with sleeping

Other tips –

- Avoid stimulants like caffeine and cigarettes close to bed time
- Exercise every day, but not too close to bedtime as your body needs time to wind down
- Try not to take afternoon naps, as this will leave you less tired come bedtime
- Warm milk before bed can help, as it contains sleep enhancing amino acids

I hope these tips provide some help and everyone gets a good night sleep tonight!

Written by: Carmen Tisseverasinghe Pharmacist Wantirna Community Pharmacy