

## Sleep Centre

# A timetable for a better night's sleep

## Information for patients, relatives and carers

### Introduction

Sleep is a learned behaviour. The recommended average sleep for adults is seven to nine hours per night, with people over 65 years requiring seven to eight hours. This leaflet will provide you with some practical steps you can do to improve your sleep quality.

### How to get a good night's sleep

- During the daytime, go outside to increase your exposure to natural daylight. This is important for your body's own natural (circadian) rhythm.
- Avoid drinks or foodstuffs that contain caffeine after 16.00 or six hours prior to bedtime.
- Undertake daily exercise in the late afternoon or early evening but avoid strenuous exercise within three to four hours of going to bed.
- Do not smoke or consume alcohol within two to three hours of bedtime. Avoid drinking excess fluids in the evening. The average UK adult needs 1.2 litres of fluid per day.
- If you have a light snack before bedtime avoid sugary, spicy or fatty foods.
- Avoid using electronic devices, for example, tablets or phones, within 1 hour of bedtime.
- Do not go to bed until you feel drowsy.
- Make sure the bedroom is quiet and dark. Use blackout curtains if required.
- Turn off electronic devices and ensure that any timepieces are not visible during the night. If you need an alarm to wake you, place the device where it can be heard but not seen.
- Avoid sleep tracking apps.
- Make sure the bedroom temperature is not too warm or too cold.
- Consider separate beds or bedrooms if your partner disturbs your sleep.

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## Stimulus control instructions

**Avoid using your bed or bedroom for any activity other than sleep.** You should avoid watching television, reading, talking on the telephone, worrying, arguing with your bed partner, or eating in bed. The exception to this rule is that you may engage in sexual activity in bed.

**Establish a set of regular pre-sleep routines to signal that bedtime is approaching,** for example, brushing your teeth, setting your alarm, and any other tasks that marks your bedtime. Do these activities in the same order each night. Use your preferred sleep position and combination of favourite pillows and blankets.

**If you need an alarm, place it out of sight** so you cannot see the time if you wake up in the night. Checking the time when you wake at night can increase anxiety around not sleeping and make the problem worse.

**When you get into bed, turn out the lights with the intention of going to sleep.** If you do not fall asleep within a short time (about 20 minutes, without checking the time), get up and go into another room. Engage in some other quiet activity until you feel drowsy and then return to the bedroom to sleep. If you still do not fall asleep within a brief time, repeat the process as often as it is necessary throughout the night. Follow this procedure if you wake in the middle of the night and do not fall asleep within 20 minutes.

**Consider joining the online programme [Sleepstation](http://www.sleepstation.org.uk).** This is a programme of insomnia cognitive behavioural therapy (iCBT). It is available free of charge to NHS patients at [www.sleepstation.org.uk](http://www.sleepstation.org.uk).

Or your GP can refer you for insomnia cognitive behavioural therapy (iCBT) through the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) service.

## How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3312 7777** (10.00 – 16.00, Monday to Friday). You can also email PALS at [imperial.pals@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.pals@nhs.net) The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street  
London W2 1NY

Email: [ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net](mailto:ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net)

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

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## Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team:  
[imperial.communications@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.communications@nhs.net)

## Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: [www.imperial.nhs.uk](http://www.imperial.nhs.uk)

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