

## Sleep

### Useful tips if you're recovering from COVID-19

Poor sleep interferes with every aspect of your life and limits your ability to build up your exercise tolerance. Poor sleep may be related to habit, depression, medication or over-stimulating activities before sleep such as watching television. Some of the following suggestions may help.

#### Avoid alcohol 4-6 hours before bedtime

Many people believe that alcohol helps them sleep. While alcohol has an immediate sleep-inducing effect, a few hours later as the alcohol levels in your blood start to fall, there is a stimulant or wake-up effect.

#### Avoid caffeine 4-6 hours before bedtime

This includes coffee, tea and many fizzy drinks, as well as chocolate

#### Avoid heavy, spicy, or sugary foods 4 hours before bedtime

These can affect your ability to stay asleep.

#### Exercise regularly, but not right before bed

Regular exercise, particularly in the afternoon, can help deepen sleep. Strenuous exercise within the 2 hours before bedtime, however, can decrease your ability to fall asleep.

#### Reserve the bed for sleep and sex

Don't use the bed as an office, workroom or recreation room. Let your body "know" that the bed is associated with sleeping.

### Your breathing

#### If you are woken by coughing:

- For a dry cough, try wedging yourself with pillows so that you sleep on your side and don't roll onto your back during the night; tucking your chin in may also help. On your back, your throat is narrower and the edges may touch and irritate your cough receptors
- For a productive cough, make sure that you have a good session with your chest clearance regime before you go to bed

### If you are woken by breathlessness:

- **Remind yourself that breathlessness is not harmful**
- **Change your position, e.g. sitting more upright might help**
- **Turn on your fan, open or close the window, check room temperature**
- **Do your breathing control**
- **Do some relaxation practice**

### Getting up in the night

Many people wake up once or twice for various reasons. If you find that you get up in the middle of night and cannot get back to sleep within 15-20 minutes, then do not remain in the bed "trying hard" to sleep. Get out of bed. Leave the bedroom. Read, have a light snack, do some quiet activity, or take a bath. You will generally find that you can get back to sleep 20 minutes or so later. Do not perform challenging or engaging activity such as office work or housework. Do not watch television.

### Television

Many people fall asleep with the television on in their room. Watching television before bedtime is often a bad idea. Television is a very engaging medium that tends to keep people up. We generally recommend that the television not be in the bedroom. At the appropriate bedtime, the TV should be turned off and you should go to bed. Some people find that the radio helps them go to sleep. Since radio is a less engaging medium than TV, this is probably a good idea.

### Other factors affecting sleep

**Several physical factors are known to upset sleep.**

These include arthritis, acid reflux with heartburn, menstruation, headaches and hot flushes.

**Problems like depression, anxiety and stress are often associated with sleeping difficulty.**

Sometimes difficulty staying asleep may be the only sign of depression. Depression may be helped by talking to a good friend, a counsellor or taking anti-depressants.

**Many medications can cause sleeplessness as a side effect.**

Ask your doctor or pharmacist if medications you are taking can lead to sleeplessness.

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