



I have trouble sleeping, what can I do now?

What is good sleep and why is it important?

People differ in the amount of sleep they need. On average, an adult person sleeps about 7-8 hours a night. Babies and adolescents need more sleep, older people usually less.

Sleep is necessary to regain energy and to process impressions or knowledge gained during the day. Good sleep is important, not only for a variety of mental functions (such as memory, concentration and mood), but also for maintaining resistance against diseases.

What types of sleeping problems exist?

There are different types of sleeping problems:

- Difficulty falling asleep (it takes a long time to fall asleep)
- Difficulty sleeping through the night (frequently waking up at night)
- Waking up very early in the morning

These problems usually do not indicate having a disease, although there may be some conditions (such as sleep apnea, narcolepsy, etc.) that need to be ruled out.

What is good sleeping hygiene?

You can do a number of things to improve your sleep (during the day, evening and night).

Food and drinks



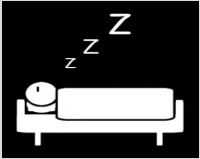
- Avoid eating heavy meals in the evening
- Limit your caffeine consumption and do not drink coffee, tea or soda after 2 pm
- Avoid alcohol consumption before going to bed (falling asleep may be easier, but sleep quality worsens)
- Avoid nicotine use before going to bed

Movement



- Move sufficiently during the day/have sufficient physical exercise
- Avoid intense exercise before going to bed (falling asleep may be more difficult)
- Go outside and expose yourself to sufficient sunlight (daylight is important for your sleep pattern)

Sleep environment



- Make sure you have a good bed, mattress and pillow
- Ventilate regularly and ensure a good room temperature (between 18 and 20 °C)
- Ensure you have a quiet and dark bedroom (use earplugs if necessary)
- Avoid watching TV, using your mobile phone and/or tablet right before going to bed and in the bedroom
- Place your alarm clock out of sight
- Use the bedroom only for sleeping and making love

Sleeping routines



- Try to go to sleep at the same time and get up at the same time (even during the weekend)
- Limit the amount of naps during the day (a nap should not be any longer than 20 minutes)
- Do a calm activity before going to bed: take a hot shower, read a book, ...
- Don't go to bed until you feel tired

Do you still have trouble sleeping despite these tips? Then get up after lying awake for 20 minutes. Do a calm/`boring` activity (such as folding laundry, reading a book, listening to music or meditating) and don't go back to sleep until you feel tired.

What if my sleeping problem continues?

Maybe you've tried a lot of things, but you still can't manage to sleep well. Sleeping problems sometimes persist in response to stressful situations. After a few weeks, you may begin to associate your bed with `the place where I lie awake`. This can make you tense and will make sleeping even more difficult.

If your sleeping problem persists for a long time, you may need to talk to your doctor to see how you can change the way you think and/or live. Perhaps you can solve problems in a different way or organize your life differently. Sleeping problems that already exist for a long time can still be treated successfully!

It is important to realize that it may take a while to treat your sleeping problem. Your sleeping problem might have developed itself over a longer period of time. Follow the doctor's advice, give yourself time and hang in there!

It is important to **avoid sleeping medication as much as possible**. This is because you can easily become addicted to it and need more and more to get the same effect. Over time, it will not help you anymore. As such, treatments without the use of medication will help you better in the long run.

Sometimes it may be necessary to be referred to a sleeping lab in a sleeping clinic or hospital. Here, you will stay overnight and (the quality of) your sleep will be closely monitored.

In addition, it may be helpful to keep a sleep-wake diary or a diary in which you write down the things you worry about. Discuss with your doctor if this could be useful and how to fill this out in the best way.