

## TIP SHEET 14.4

### Tips for a good night's sleep

- Develop a sleep schedule and, as far as possible, stick to it: Go to bed and get up at the same time each day.
- Exercise has a host of physical and psychological benefits that are particularly important for sleep. At least 30 minutes of moderate intensity exercise most days encourages good sleep.
- Avoid exercising late in the day: As exercise promotes alertness, don't exercise for 2-3 hours before bedtime.
- Avoid stimulants.
- Avoid alcohol before bed.
- Eat small amounts before bed, and include some complex carbohydrates in your evening meal.
- Avoid beverages late at night.
- Limit day-time naps and avoid afternoon naps after 3.00pm.
- Beware over-the-counter medications. Consult your GP regarding the effects of any over-the counter medications.
- Assess medication appropriateness. Some medications impair sleeping; others promote it. If you have sleeping difficulties, consult your GP regarding the impact that your current medications may be having. It may be possible to swap one medication for another, which has similar properties but is not associated with sleeping problems.
- Review timing of medication. This is particularly relevant for people prescribed a weight-related pharmacotherapy such as Duramine, which is known to impair sleep. Switching to a lower dose, or ensuring that the medication is taken very early in the morning can assist.
- Relax before bed by engaging in a relaxing activity, such as reading or listening to a relaxation tape.
- Keep a notebook by the bed. Sometimes thoughts about particular issues, or things to do, interferes with sleep. For some people, jotting these ideas down can be helpful to 'get it out of your head' and allow sleep.
- Take a hot bath before bed. Many people find that the ritual of a hot bath is relaxing, while the drop in temperature post bath assists with falling asleep.
- Have sunlight exposure. Daylight is the key to regulating sleep patterns. Get outside into the sunlight for at least 30 minutes a day, preferably in the morning when the sunlight is at its

strongest. Where possible, rise with the sun or use very bright lights to wake up in the morning.

- Use your bed for sex and sleep only. Avoid watching TV, reading, or any other activity in bed.
- Have a good sleeping environment. To sleep well, your room needs to be dark, cool, and free from distraction, such as noises or lights. Flashing cell phones can be distracting, as can a computer that is left on. Also ensure that you have a comfortable bed and pillow.
- Keep your sleeping environment cool. About 19-23 degrees C suits most people.
- Put any digital clocks out of line of sight. Clock watching is exacerbated when the clock is in easy view.
- Use a relaxation techniques to relax and clear unwanted, stressful thoughts.
- Don't lie in bed awake. If you have not fallen asleep in approximately 20 minutes, get up and do something that is relaxing. When you feel sleepy return to bed.
- Develop safe place rituals. For people with a history of trauma, increasing feelings of safety and security is particularly important at night. There may be a particular 'safe place meditation', or object that this associated with safety, that will help. Practical strategies, such as keeping some light on in your bedroom, and your cell phone handy, can also assist.

(Adapted from National Institute of Health, 2005:27-29)