Having trouble with sleeping?

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted many aspects of our lives in the last few months, including how well we sleep at night. For many of us problems with sleeping become a regular occurrence that start interfering with our daily lives. Insufficient and poor sleep has a negative impact both on our physical and mental wellbeing. It can contribute to long-term health problems, such as weakened immunity, type 2 diabetes, or cardiovascular disease. Also, poor sleep may cause problems with concentration, memory, and reaction times, all of which make it harder to perform our daily tasks both at home and work. If you have developed difficulties with sleeping or just want to improve your sleep, try following these healthy sleep habits.

Stick to a sleep schedule

Keep a consistent sleep schedule. Go to bed and get up at the same time every day, even on weekends or during holidays. This will help to regulate your body's internal clock so it can be easier for you to fall asleep and sleep through the night.

Make your bedroom sleep-friendly

Your bedroom ideally needs to be dark, quiet, tidy and be kept at a temperature of between 18C and 24C. It should also be free from any noise and light that can disturb your sleep. Consider using blackout curtains, eye shades, ear plugs, "white noise" appliances, humidifiers, and other devices that can help to create a relaxing environment that suits your needs. Also, make sure that your mattress and pillows are comfortable and of a good quality.

Pay attention to what you eat and drink

Try to avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and coffee in the evenings, as they can disrupt your sleep. Also, don't eat large meals for two to three hours before bedtime. Avoid eating heavy and spicy meals, as they can cause discomfort from indigestion and heartburn, which can make it hard to sleep. Instead, opt for light and healthy snacks, such as nuts or oat cakes, if you feel hungry in the evening.

Wind down

Practice a relaxing bedtime ritual. Your body needs time to shift into a sleep mode so try to spend the last hour before bedtime doing some calming activities. For example, you could read a book, listen to relaxing music, have a warm bath, or meditate.
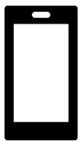
Avoid using electronic devices

Try not to use your phone, tablet, or laptop before going to sleep. Electronic devices emit the light that can stimulate your brain and affect your internal body clock. If you have to use your phone before bedtime, at least put the blue light filter on and dim the screen brightness.

Limit daytime naps

Long naps in the middle of the day can interfere with the night-time sleep. If you choose to nap, limit yourself to up to 30 minutes and avoid doing it so late in the day.

Exercise regularly

Being physically active during the day can help you fall asleep more easily at night. Vigorous exercises are the best, but even light exercise is better than no activity. However, try to avoid doing exercises late in the evening as they will have a stimulatory effect and could cause sleep problems.

Seek professional help

If you're still having troubles with sleeping, find a sleep professional who can evaluate the issues you are having with your sleep. It can be a good idea to keep a sleep diary, as it may uncover lifestyle habits or daily activities that contribute to your sleeplessness. Also, if your sleep problem persists talk to your doctor because an underlying health condition may be the cause of your sleep problems.