Advice on how to sleep better

STUDENT HEALTH CENTRE, LUND UNIVERSITY
It is important to have a clear separation between work/study and spare time in order to stimulate sleep. You should create a space for rest, wind-down and relaxation.

One way is to create an evening ritual before bedtime, such as sitting in a particular place, reading something, turning off your mobile phone/computer/TV. Reflect on the day, your thoughts and feelings, and get rid of them before you go to bed. Sometimes it may help to write down your thoughts. You can also write down the things you did not have time for during the day, so that you don’t have to worry about forgetting them.

Another ritual could be to do a relaxation exercise that involves refocusing your thoughts on the here and now and affect your breathing frequency and muscle tension.

**Simple breathing exercise**

Try to open your mouth and relax your jaw and the back of your tongue. Usually, your breathing will then quickly go from stress breathing to a calmer breathing. By doing this in the evening or during the day, tensions before going to bed are not built up but rather dissolved, making it easier to relax.

**Relaxation exercise in bed**

1. Relax your jaw and the back of your tongue. Close your eyes and take a deep breath, inhale, inhale more, hold your breath, feel the tension, and exhale.
2. Open your eyes halfway, then let them close. Repeat steps 1 and 2 for a while, and continue to breathe at your own pace.
Ten tips for improved sleep

• Make sure to get at least one hour of daylight a day.
• Maintain a balance in your activities during the day, that is, do not plan too much in one day and engage in different types of activities. The body and mind respond well to structure!
• Get up and go to bed at the same times every day.
• Avoid caffeine and heavy meals close to bedtime.
• Alcohol can be perceived as improving your sleep, but it makes your quality of sleep worse.
• Physical activity can help you sleep better.
• Make sure it is dark and cool in the room where you sleep.
• Go to bed when you are sleepy.
• Do not compare yourself with others – it is too easy to feel like a failure and have performance anxiety. We all have different needs of sleep.
• If you do not fall asleep within 30–40 minutes, get up for a short while. If you do not sleep as much as you think you need, your body will adjust this in your deep sleep the following night. You do not need to increase the number of hours you sleep the following night.

Are any of these tips useful to you? Try one at a time! Making one change requires patience, and takes about 6–8 weeks for it to last.

Seek help if during the last three months you have been: having trouble falling asleep, waking up during the night and not been able to fall back to sleep for several hours, or waking up too early.
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