Sleep and worry

Sometimes it is hard to go to sleep or to sleep well because we are worried about other things. It is important to not let worries creep into your relaxing bed time. Try setting a 'worry time' earlier in the day for you to practically think through your problems and their solutions. Alternatively, write them down in a diary before you begin your sleep routine then agree with yourself not to think about them until the next day.

Nightmares or night-terrors

Most people have occasional nightmares. These are sometimes caused by worry, if you've seen something that has upset you or had something scary happen to you. If you have vivid dreams about these events or worries it may be good to talk about them with someone you trust. It would also be helpful to prioritise creating a relaxing sleep environment.

If you still have worries about your sleep problems and want to talk to someone please contact your GP for further advice.

Contact

The Emotional Health Service
42 York Street, Twickenham TW1 3BW
T: 020 8487 5470

Opening hours:
Monday to Thursday: 8.45am to 5.00pm
Friday: 8.45am to 4.45 pm

W: www.afcinfo.org.uk/emotionalhealthservice

Emotional Health Service

Sleep problems

Information for young people

achieving for children

Different types of sleep problems

Sleep is a very important part of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. However many young people have problems with sleep. These may appear in different ways:

- trouble getting to sleep
- trouble staying asleep
- feeling tired during the day
- nightmares
- night terrors
- sleepwalking

It is important to address these issues early because sleep problems can lead to other problems over time. For example, it can be hard to concentrate when you have not had sufficient sleep and this can cause stress or anxiety.

Why do I have sleep problems?

Sleep problems are very common and can occur for a range of different reasons. Sometimes sleep problems are related to the environment that you have set up for yourself to sleep in and sometimes there is an emotional reason for these problems that needs to be addressed.

Daily life considerations

Many things that we do during the day affect how we sleep at night. Consider each item on this list and how it could affect your sleep.

- How often do you exercise in a week? Exercise is known to improve sleep.
- How much caffeine or sugar do you consume close to bed time? Cutting back may help.
- Do you use a device with a bright screen in the hour before bed? Try avoiding this.
- Do you save up all of your worries to think about in bed? Find another time to think about these so that bed can be a relaxing, pleasant place.
- Do you go to bed with your body feeling uncomfortable? Try not to eat a heavy meal less than three hours before bedtime.

Sleep routine

It is likely that our natural daily rhythm is longer that the 24 hour cycle, so it can be easy to gradually move to sleeping later and waking up later. It is important to stick to a regular wake-up time to prevent this slide, especially if you are struggling to get to sleep.

What you do in the morning as well as what you do in the evening have an effect on how easily you get to sleep and stay asleep in the evening. The first step of developing a routine is deciding what time you will go to bed and what time you will wake up, Make sure that you have enough hours sleep so that you can stick to these times.

Morning routine

Wake up at the same time every day (don't try and catch-up by sleeping in), have a bright light on in the mornings and eat your breakfast before you have any caffeine.

Night routine

Make sure you have a small routine of relaxing things to do before bed such as taking a bath, reading, listening to relaxing music, etc.

Sleeping environment

Good sleep environments are essential to good sleep but it is so easy to forget about how your environment could be affecting your sleep. Check that all of these factors are 'just right' before trying to go to sleep:

- temperature
- noise
- light
- general comfort of your bed