

Sleep – get good rest to be at your best



A toolkit to use in your organisation



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activate employee performance

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Introduction

Sleep is vital to our overall health and wellbeing, but for many of us getting a good night's sleep can be difficult to achieve.

The pace of life, modern technology and working practices together with increased stress levels, all work against our body's natural inbuilt 'circadian rhythm' which can cause problems when it comes to getting good sleep.

What is the aim of the toolkit?

This toolkit is designed to help you and your colleagues understand why sleep is so important to overall health and wellbeing and to introduce simple tools and techniques to help with getting a better night's sleep.

The toolkit includes exercises and helpful handouts to help you support colleagues to improve their sleep and to recognise those areas of their life which impact sleep the most.

There are two handouts (a sleep diary and top tips to get good sleep) and useful links to further resources and support.

The toolkit can be used in different ways, including:

- As a discussion document, helping you to share the exercises and tips with your employees. Exercises can be explained and encouragement given to engage in these activities
- As a short workshop, where you can choose one or two of the exercises that you think your employees will enjoy and give handouts for them to take home and try in their own time

Why not try introducing the exercises to individuals in 1:1s or a coaching session, or to a group of people in team meetings or briefings?

Please note: While the exercises / handouts can be helpful tools on their own, they may be more effective when combined with other improvements to sleep hygiene, such as maintaining a consistent sleep routine and cultivating daytime habits that promote sleep.

While these exercises are safe for most people, others may benefit from talking to their doctors before trying them.



TOP
TIPS

Don't forget there is also a **poster** on the **Sovereign Resource Hub** for you to print and display in your workplace.

Top tips for great sleep

Rest recovery and repair



Keep a sleep diary – know your numbers

Do you or any of your colleagues have trouble sleeping? If this is the case, get to understand your sleep problem by keeping a sleep diary, using Handout 1 overleaf, to record how much sleep you get each night. This is where the numbers come in.

A sleep diary is useful in understanding where your sleep problems lie. For example, you may see patterns in your quality of sleep depending on what time you go to bed, or you might notice that you wake-up at the same time every night; there may even be certain days of the week when you have trouble sleeping.

How to use the sleep diary

DAY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
What time did you go to bed last night?							
After settling down, how long did it take you to fall asleep?							
If you woke in the night, how long were you awake for?							
At what time did you wake up this morning?							
How long after waking did you get out of bed?							
From going to bed to getting out of bed this morning, how long were you asleep for?							
In total how long did you sleep for last night?							
How would you rate the quality of your sleep last night?	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
1=very poor 2=poor	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
3=average 4=good	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
5=very good	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
	5	5	5	5	5	5	5

Using the sleep diary you can work out, on average, how much time you spend sleeping, compared to how long you spend in bed.

To get the best quality sleep, you need to associate your bed with sleep. The way to achieve this is by matching the time in bed with the time spent asleep.

For example, if you only sleep for 6 hours, you should only spend 6 hours in your bed, rather than 9 hours in bed, with the other 3 hours spent on non-sleep related activities like watching TV or browsing on your smartphone or tablet.

This can help to form your sleep into one blissful, uninterrupted session, rather than being broken throughout the night. You'll also build a clearer association between bed and sleep in your mind.

See Handout 1 overleaf



Don't forget to visit the Sovereign Resource Hub for more top tips and to listen to the **Sleep podcast!**

Handout 1

Sleep diary

Try to fill in each morning



DAY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
What time did you go to bed last night?							
After settling down, how long did it take you to fall asleep?							
If you woke in the night, how long were you awake for?							
At what time did you wake up this morning?							
How long after waking did you get out of bed?							
From going to bed to getting out of bed this morning, how long were you in bed for?							
In total how long did you sleep for last night?							
How would you rate the quality of your sleep last night? 1=very poor 2=poor 3=average 4=good 5=very good	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5



Find your sleep score: This short test from Sleepio will give you a 'sleep score' plus practical tips and advice for improving your sleep. [Click here](#)

Handout 2

Top tips for great S.L.E.E.P



Sleep routine - do the same thing every night

Just like any other routine, bedtime routines establish habits that can help our brains recognise when it's time to sleep. By doing the same things in the same order every night, your brain comes to link those activities with sleep.

- **Try to keep to a set bedtime** – this will help you work with your natural in-built rhythm
- **Write down your worries** – give yourself permission to deal with them tomorrow
- **Take a warm bath** – when we fall asleep our body temperature drops. By taking a warm bath can mimic this as the body warms up in the bath but then cools as we get out. This can make you feel tired and relaxed



Light - get outside during the day

Knowing which light to embrace and which to avoid can really help improve the quality of sleep. We need daylight to help us get a good night's sleep but artificial/blue light can also prevent this happening. Try to get outside in the morning and throughout the day. Being exposed to natural light stimulates the Pituitary gland to produce melatonin, encouraging quality sleep later in the day. Avoid artificial/blue light by turning off your smartphone, TV and other gadgets well before bedtime.



Environment - create the right space for sleep

A key way to improve sleep is to ensure your sleeping environment is relaxing and conducive to sleep.

- **Temperature** – the ideal room temperature for sleep is 15–18 degrees celsius
- **Minimise light** – make the room as dark as possible. Consider black out curtains or even an eye mask
- **Oxygen** – open the window or at least a door to allow more air to circulate



Exercise - move more to get physically tired

You probably know exercise is important to our health but do you know that exercise can have a positive effect on the quality of sleep you experience? Exercise helps to stabilise your mood – you may worry less – and if you exercise outside during the day, you will be exposed to more natural light reinforcing your circadian rhythm.



Put down the pick me ups - caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine

Caffeine, alcohol and nicotine are stimulants which can stop you falling into the deeper stages of sleep. If you struggle with sleep, try cutting down on your alcohol and caffeine intake, and putting down the cigarettes, particularly close to bedtime. Why not take the 'Sleep Quiz', which is in the activities section of the resource hub to learn more.



Download the poster on the Sovereign Resource Hub and display in your workplace!

Helpful links and resources

The following links can be used to read, learn and contact others in order to support you and your colleagues. Many of the sites have downloadable fact sheets and take-away information which support the use of this toolkit. The links are also available on the Sovereign Resource Hub.

Find your sleep score

This short test from Sleepio will give you a 'sleep score' plus practical tips and advice for improving your sleep.

<https://assets.nhs.uk/tools/self-assessments/index.mob.html?variant=72>

Breathing exercises for better sleep

Headspace has lots of sleep tips, including 45 minutes of sleep music called 'Slumber'.

<https://www.headspace.com/sleep/breathing-exercises-for-better-sleep>

How to check if you have insomnia

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/insomnia>

Learn more about mindfulness

Find out how it can help your mental wellbeing.

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/tips-and-support/mindfulness>

Watch this NHS video for help with sleep problems

Professor Colin Espie, professor of sleep medicine at the University of Oxford, says: "It really helps if you're on a wind-down curve some while before you go to bed."

<https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-health-issues/sleep>

Please note: Just like learning any new skill, relaxation exercises take practice. Repetitive and ongoing use of relaxation exercises is usually more effective than one-time or short-term use. While it's tempting to look for the best and most effective relaxation techniques, what's most important is to find one what works for you. This may take some experimenting, so if one exercise doesn't work, just try another.

Relaxation exercises to help you fall asleep

The Sleep Foundation have more exercises to help you breathe and relax your body.

<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-hygiene/relaxation-exercises-to-help-fall-asleep>

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Don't forget to visit the Sovereign Resource Hub for more top tips and listen to the **Sleep podcast!**