

Sleep with Ease

The need for sleep

The importance of sleep cannot be overstated. It is when body and mind are repaired and rejuvenated. Most people sleep 7 to 8 hours a day. Anything from 6 to 9 hours is ideal. Too much, too little or disrupted sleep can cause problems such as irritability, exhaustion, and decreased concentration and reaction time. Ask yourself why you are not sleeping – is it because of things on your mind, being too alert, and/or where you are sleeping?

Worries on your mind?

There are some worries that you may or may not be able to do anything about. If you are worried then:

- Don't drink much alcohol before bed as it can cause you to wake up during the night, or may cause snoring. Try warm milk or herbal tea instead.
- Rather than keep your worries to yourself, talk to a friend, family member, or counsellor.
- Try not to worry that you wake up in the night, as this will make you more alert.
- Don't habitually take sleeping pills.
- Give yourself 'time out for worry' during the day, focussing especially on what you think you can change.
- Write your worries into a journal before you get into bed.
- Keep a pen and paper beside the bed and jot down any thoughts you want to remember. That way they do not continue to go around in your head.
- Turn your clock to the wall.
- Get up and do something else after about 30 minutes.

Too alert?

Sometimes you can be too physically or mentally alert or overstimulated. If you are, then:

- Avoid taking naps during the day. Instead, include exercise into your day. For example, use the stairs where possible.
- Ideally, allow 3 to 6 hours between intense physical exercise and bedtime so that your body has cooled down before you sleep. If your body temperature is too high, sleeping can be more difficult.
- Avoid intense mental activity, such as studying, less than an hour before bed. Try a more passive activity like watching TV, or light reading.
- Try to use your bed for sleep rather than study. Study at your desk where possible.
- Avoid drinking caffeine or other stimulants (ie. coffee, cola, chocolate, tea) in the evenings or late afternoon.
- Have a massage (ie. feel rather than think before sleeping).

Sleep with Ease

- Rather than harsh, bright lighting, have subdued, soft lighting in the evening to induce sleep. This mirrors a normal day/night cycle.
- Take a moderately hot bath a few hours before going to bed, to then allow your body to cool down to a temperature conducive to sleep.
- Read something light sitting up in bed.

Uncomfortable?

Take steps to make you and where you sleep as comfortable as possible.

- Empty your bladder before going to bed.
- Keep regular sleep hours (ie. aim to go to bed and get up at the same time each day). Avoid over-sleeping.
- Have good ventilation in your bedroom if possible. Your brain needs oxygen for good quality sleep.
- Have a reasonably cool bedroom. Around 16°C is ideal. Adjust your bedclothes so you are not too hot or too cold.
- Get a comfy bed that is also firm.
- Make your room dark.
- Buy some earplugs from a chemist if your environment is noisy.
- Play a tape or CD of soft, gentle music or soothing sounds if your bedroom is too quiet, or use a fan to cover any intermittent noise.
- Avoid eating a heavy meal late at night; especially highly processed, sugary, quick energy release foods.

Sleep mantra

When you want to sleep, say the following to yourself over and over again in time with every four breath cycles: 'Go to sleep, completely at peace, the whole night through'.

Go to <i>Breathe in</i>	sleep <i>Breathe out</i>	completely <i>Breathe in</i>	at peace <i>Breathe out</i>
the whole <i>Breathe in</i>	night <i>Breathe out</i>	through <i>Breathe in</i>	(silence) <i>Breathe out</i>

For further information contact the UNE Counsellors at:

Student Assist
Phone: 02 6773 2897
Email: counselling.service@une.edu.au
www.une.edu.au/counselling