



## Part 2 – Sleep

During this extraordinary time sleep is important for both our physical and mental wellbeing, helping us to recover from mental as well as physical exertion.

A good night's sleep helps us to.

- ✓ Concentrate and be more active during the day.
- ✓ Eat more healthily. If we are tired, we tend to reach for the chocolates and caffeine to keep us alert!
- ✓ Improve our immune function.



Sleeping well is important as we try and make sense of the world at the moment. During sleep we are actively processing and storing information – all the incredible amounts of information the brain takes in during the day. We need sleep to restore and rejuvenate, to grow muscle, and repair tissue.

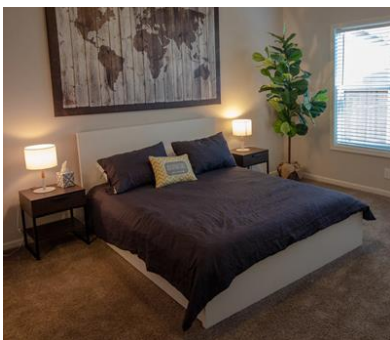
The amount of sleep we need is different for everyone. Children will require more sleep than adults as they are learning and processing lots more things, and generally are more active during the day.

Often, one of the first signs that we need to take care of our wellbeing is disruptions to our sleep. We may have problems getting off to sleep, waking up lots through the night, waking too early then not getting back to sleep or having restless nights.



Thus, we can all benefit from improving the quality of our sleep, and the good thing is it often only needs small lifestyle adjustments.

Think about how you might improve your sleep:



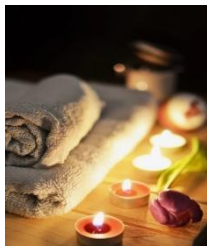
### Environment

Where you sleep is important. Not too noisy or light, not too hot or cold and a comfortable bed. The bedroom and bed should only be associated with sleep. So, avoid watching TV or playing on phones!

## Lifestyle

In Part 1 of our Mental Health and Wellbeing series, we talked about the importance of routine and balance during this time...its exactly the same to help sleep. Our body and mind like routine so:

1. Try to go to bed and get up about the same time each day



2. Wind down before bed...relax, warm bath, mindfulness practice (see the separate DSAuk article on Mindfulness). Avoid pumping up the adrenaline through watching horror movies or playing active games!

3. Have a bedtime routine.... let the dogs out, lock the doors downstairs, into night clothes, brush your teeth and into bed.

4. Exercise during the day to get the blood and oxygen pumping round the body, but not too close to bedtime otherwise it releases adrenaline.

5. Turn off your tablets and phones an hour before bedtime. Blue light from these can stimulate daylight and keep us awake. The content can also keep us alert if it triggers excitement, anxiety, anger.



6. Avoid too many liquids in the evening as they'll wake us up for the toilet (especially those of us that are more mature!).

7. Avoid heavy meals before bedtime, reduce caffeine after 4pm and whilst alcohol might seem to help sleep it reduces the quality of the sleep later during the night.

### **Caffeine content of some drinks/foods**

Product	Caffeine content (mg)
Instant coffee – level teaspoon	45
Instant coffee – heaped teaspoon	90
Filtered	140
Tea - weak	20
Tea -strong	70
Coke	50
Red Bull	80
Dark chocolate	33
Milk chocolate	12

It is recommended that an adult has no more than 400 mg per day (equivalent to about 4 cups of coffee)



## Dwarf Sports Association UK Mental Health and Wellbeing



If you wake up during the night here are some tips:

- ✓ Focus on your breathing. Breathe in for 7 counts and out for 11.
- ✓ Listen to sounds you can hear in the room and outside.
- ✓ Focus on the details of something relaxing to you – lyrics of a song, poem; route of a walk or cycle ride; activities on holiday

Very often when we can't sleep, we start to worry about not getting enough sleep or getting back to sleep. The more you worry you are unable to get back to sleep the more it will keep you awake. If you are still awake after 20 minutes get up.



- Find somewhere to relax and do something like reading a book, colouring, listening to relaxing music. When you feel sleepy go back to bed. Remember bed should be associated with sleeping not worrying.

In the middle of the night thoughts and worries can appear 'much bigger' and spiral into more and more worries. We will not solve anything at 2 o'clock in the morning so:

- Keep paper and pen next to your bed and write down your thoughts. Place this in your bedside cabinet drawer. Tell yourself you have written your thoughts down so you won't forget them but will look at them in the morning. Chances are when you do attend to them in the morning they won't be half as worrisome, and you'll be able to figure them out.



Happy sleeping!

For more information:

The Sleep Council: A helpline and information to help improve sleep.

[www.sleepcouncil.org.uk](http://www.sleepcouncil.org.uk)

Mental Health Foundation: A factsheet with information and tips

[www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/how-to-sleep-better](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/how-to-sleep-better)

If you are worried about your sleep and the effect it is having on other aspects of your life speak to your GP.

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