



Royal Berkshire
NHS Foundation Trust

Prehab: Sleep better

Information for patients
preparing for an operation
or procedure

Why is sleep important for your treatment?

Getting the right amount of good quality sleep has many benefits for our physical and mental health. Evidence suggests it is just as important as having a healthy diet and doing regular exercise.

Good sleep can:

- Help your concentration levels
- Help you manage pain better
- Allow your body to repair damaged tissue
- Improve your immune system
- Help your mental wellbeing

How much sleep do we need?

Most adults need 7-9 hours, but everyone is different. You should ask yourself if you're getting enough good sleep, by thinking about the following:

- Do you feel sleepy during the day?
- Do you struggle with energy levels?
- Do you feel refreshed when you wake up and during the day?

How do we know if we struggle with sleep?

Signs or symptoms of sleep problems

- Find it difficult to fall asleep (longer than half hour)
- Lie awake for long periods at night
- Wake up several times during the night
- Wake up early and be unable to get back to sleep
- Feel down or have a lower mood
- Have difficulty concentrating
- Be more irritable than usual

Prehab reminder:

You should see your GP if you have had problems with sleep for more than one month and it is affecting your everyday life.

How can I improve my sleep?

We have included some simple lifestyle changes below. You can make these changes during the day and just before you go to bed to help improve your sleep quality.

Sleep hygiene checklist

- ☐ Avoid caffeine after lunch
- ☐ Going to bed and getting up at fixed times
- ☐ Avoid naps after noon
- ☐ Avoid food and exercise within 2 hours before bedtime
- ☐ Avoid alcohol, smoking before going to bed
- ☐ Keep your room cool, dark and quiet
- ☐ Put your phones or other devices outside bedroom

Exercise regularly during the daytime

Exercising during the day can help you have a better night's sleep. However, vigorous exercise within two hours of going to bed may delay your sleep. Try doing a relaxing exercise, such as yoga, before going to bed to help you sleep.

Exposure to natural light during the day

The exposure to **natural light** during the day, especially in the morning and midday, can improve sleep. Make it a habit to step outside for at least an hour each morning or afternoon, which can help you to maintain a healthy sleep-wake cycle. However, too much light exposure in the evening, such as bright light, cool-toned colour (blue light from phone screens) can prevent you from feeling sleep.

If you DO struggle to sleep

- Don't look at the clock as this can make you anxious.
- Just get up and do something that's not stimulating, such as reading a book, listening to relaxing music, or having a milky drink.

- If there's anything on your mind, write it down and put it away
- If you are regularly waking up in pain, see a relevant healthcare professional, such as your GP.

Useful links

How to Fall Asleep Faster and Sleep Better – NHS

This NHS guide offers practical tips and strategies to improve your sleep quality, helping you fall asleep more quickly and enjoy more restful nights. www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-wellbeing-tips/how-to-fall-asleep-faster-and-sleep-better/

How to Sleep Better – Mental Health Foundation

This resource explores the connection between sleep and mental health, providing advice on habits and lifestyle changes to promote better sleep and overall wellbeing.

www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/publications/how-sleep-better

Sleep Hygiene – Headspace

Headspace explains the concept of sleep hygiene—healthy sleep habits—and shares mindfulness and relaxation techniques to help improve sleep patterns. www.headspace.com/sleep/sleep-hygiene

Sleep Action

Sleep Action provides support and resources focused on improving sleep health through education, expert advice, and tools to help manage sleep problems. <https://sleepaction.org/>

Contact information

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Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.