

# Steps to Better Sleep

Sleep is important for our health and wellbeing. When we don't get enough sleep, our physical and mental health suffers, we may become anxious or irritable, have trouble concentrating, and feel more stressed.

**When you're sleep deprived, you are as impaired as a drunk driver with a blood alcohol level of 0.08%.**

There are lots of causes of poor sleep, but the good news is that changing the way we think about sleeping and changing our habits can have a big impact.

Teens naturally fall asleep later and wake up later. This is a normal part of development.

Unfortunately, teens still have to function in a world that doesn't fit their normal patterns.

## CHANGE YOUR THINKING

Worrying about not getting enough sleep makes it less likely that you will get a good sleep. Do what you can to set the stage for a good night's sleep, and then try to let go and accept what happens.

Challenge the belief that you can't function without a perfect night's sleep. Research shows that changing our thoughts and beliefs about sleep can be more effective than sleeping pills.

Replace the unhelpful thought ...	... with a more helpful thought
"I can't fall asleep. I'm going to be exhausted tomorrow."	"I'm having trouble falling asleep. I may be tired tomorrow, but I can still make it through the day."
"I can never sleep. "	"It's normal to have trouble sleeping sometimes. This won't last forever."
"It's so late, even if I fall asleep right now, I'm only going to get 5 hours of sleep. I won't be able to do anything in the morning."	"The quality of my sleep is way more important than the quantity. I need to stop worrying about the number of hours of sleep I get."
"I only got 3 hours of sleep last night. I need to have a nap today and then sleep in on the weekend to catch up on my sleep."	"If I have a nap today, it will make it harder to fall asleep tonight. It's better for me to skip the nap and then stick to my regular bed- and wake-up times."

**QUALITY of sleep matters more than QUANTITY.**

Getting few good hours of sleep is better than getting more hours of poor sleep.

# CHANGE YOUR HABITS

Developing healthy sleep habits can make the difference between restless and restful sleep.

- **Wake up at the same time every day** (even on weekends). This helps your body establish a rhythm.
- **Avoid screens and bright lights at night.** The blue light from screens and bright lights are stimulating: they signal to your body that it's time to be awake and alert.
- **Establish a relaxing bedtime routine.** This signals your body that it is time to slow down and sleep.
- **Get some natural light** every morning. This helps set your body clock.
- **Just for sleeping.** Use your bed only for sleep. Avoid doing other things, like reading, watching TV, using your phone, or doing homework.
- **Only when sleepy.** Don't get into bed until you feel sleepy. If you don't fall asleep within 30 minutes, get up and do something quiet and relaxing.

## Keys to Success:

Make small, gradual changes.

Be consistent.

Pick one strategy and use it consistently for at least a week.

Be kind to yourself.

It takes time to change your habits. Things may get worse before they get better.

Track your progress.

Change may happen gradually. Tracking will help you notice patterns and gradual improvements.

## Things to Try

Do relaxation exercises

Listen to an audio book

Listen to a guided sleep meditation or sleep hypnosis

Experiment with Sleep Apps

- Some track your sleep cycle
- Some offer relaxing music, guided imagery, or white noise
- Some have smart alarms that wake you up during a natural waking phase

Keep a sleep diary

- Download a sleep diary, like this one from Anxiety BC
- Use a sleep diary app
- Keep a calendar by your bed. Rate your sleep each morning and note anything you tried.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION ...

[Anxiety BC Youth, Healthy Habits: Making Sleep Count](#)

[How to Cope with Sleep Problems](#)