



Did you know that up to one-in-three Australians do not get enough sleep? Sleeping well is an important pillar of your health and wellbeing. Getting a regular good night's sleep (between 7 and 9 hours a day) is associated with better physical and mental health.

Why is sleep important?

- Good sleep promotes increased mood, improves cognitive performance, and lowers the risk of long-term disease.
- It is essential for physical growth and repair, and promotes healthy immune functioning.
- Sleep is also critical for your learning. During sleep, memories are consolidated, and quality sleep leads to improved concentration.

Are you having difficulties sleeping, or are you looking for resources to help? Check out the steps below to find out more.

How much sleep do you get?

- Individuals aged between 16 to 64 years should be sleeping 7 to 9 hours a day. Use this helpful [Healthline sleep calculator](#) article to determine how much sleep you need.
- Is your sleep affected by stress, worry, or anything else? Read on.

Good sleep: strategies and tips

1. Develop healthy sleep habits

- **Keep a consistent bed and wake time.** This gives your body clock the best chance of achieving a regular rhythm. Use an alarm to assist you. Try to base your bedtime on when you tend to wake naturally. For example, if you wake at 7am, a good time to go to bed might be 10.45pm. This allows 15 minutes to fall asleep and 8 hours sleep.
- **Use your energy throughout the day.** Exercising during the day is known to promote better sleep. However, avoid heavy exercise immediately before bedtime. Studying, socialising, or completing other tasks can be forms of exertion that promote tiredness at bedtime.
- **Avoid caffeine during the 5 to 7 hours before bedtime.** Caffeine is a drug with a long half-life, meaning it can take a long time to be totally eliminated from your body. Caffeine can be found in coffee, black teas, cola and energy drinks, and chocolate.
- **Minimise or avoid alcohol consumption prior to bedtime.** Alcohol may initially make you more tired, however as your body metabolises alcohol, it causes sleep disruption, awakenings, and can contribute to nightmares and unrefreshing sleep.
- **Restrict your exposure to bright lights in the evening.** The body follows a natural circadian rhythm, which is an internal process that helps regulate falling asleep and waking up. Avoid evening screen use where possible, lower brightness, and

utilise blue light filters on devices (Apple, Android, PC and most other systems have these settings). Set your alarm for a consistent time each morning and try to avoid sleep-ins (no more than 60 minutes).

2. When should you sleep?

- Go to bed only when you are feeling tired and sleepy. Don't make yourself go to bed early if you don't feel tired, as this may cause you to lie in bed awake and feel frustrated. In turn, this may make it more difficult to fall asleep.
- After about 30 minutes, if you haven't fallen asleep or if you are feeling alert and frustrated, get up and do something relaxing until you get sleepy. Then return to bed and let sleep come to you. Repeat this process if needed until you are able to sleep.
- While you are in the process of establishing a good sleeping pattern, don't worry about falling asleep too late. There is no way to force sleep, so you might as well let it come naturally. Instead, you can incrementally set your alarm earlier each day (for example, by 15 minutes each day). In turn, you will become tired earlier at nights. Using energy throughout the day (such as exercising, studying, and socialising) will help this process of becoming naturally tired.

3. Sleeping tips if you are anxious, stress or have a 'busy mind'

- Abdominal breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, or other relaxation exercises can assist in falling asleep and combating thoughts or feelings that might be inhibiting sleep. See this [WebMD progressive muscle relaxation guide](#) for more information.
- A 'racing' or 'busy' mind is sometimes experienced at night when you are trying to fall asleep. This can inhibit sleep, and in turn, poor sleep can worsen stress and worry. If you experience this, one useful technique can be to write down any worries or concerns that you have and briefly considering a 'next-step' you can take to address these worries. Then, when you're going to sleep, you can gently remind yourself that you've already thought about this problem and you will address it the next day.
- Mindfulness meditation can assist with or complement this technique, and is commonly used to assist with sleeping. For example, [Smiling Mind](#) is a free app that you can use to practice meditation and mindfulness exercises. Read more about mindfulness meditation [here](#).

Getting help and further resources

- A doctor can help to identify and address anything that might be preventing you sleeping well. Talk to a GP at the [ANU Medical Centre](#).
- [ANU Thrive](#) offers free consultations with a student mentor to discuss available support services, referrals, and information and resources.
- [ANU Counselling](#) offers free and confidential counselling for ANU students.
- [Moodgym](#) and [MindSpot](#) are free, research-based, online mental health tools that can help to identify and manage symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression.
- See below links for further tips, resources and information:
 - [Tips to improve your sleep](#)
 - [Why sleep is important](#)
 - [Sleep, Learning, and Memory](#)
 - [Calculating your required sleep](#)