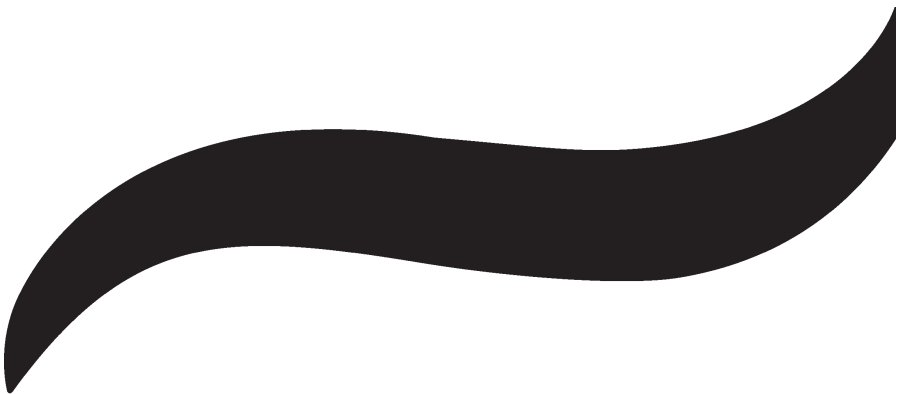


# Tips for Better Sleep

Information for clients





## SLEEP AND SLEEP PROBLEMS

There is no correct amount of sleep that everyone must have. Sleep is a natural process that is not directly under our control. Our bodies take what they need. In the short-term our bodies will adjust the type and quality of sleep to make sure we stay healthy.

If people think they are not sleeping enough, it can be worrying to them. In fact, research has shown that people who think they are poor sleepers and those who think they are good sleepers both sleep for about the same amount of time. So although some people may think they are not sleeping enough, in fact they probably are.

It is not possible never to sleep. Studies have shown that people cannot keep going without sleep. Even if people are deprived of sleep for long periods, they always fall asleep in the end!

This is not to say that worrying about lack of sleep is not a very real problem to some people. There are many different reasons for sleep problems. They might be:

- Stress, anxiety or worry** When we are stressed or anxious our bodies are more alert and our minds tend to be full of worrying thoughts.
- Surroundings** Noise, too much heat or cold, an uncomfortable bed, or too much light can all affect sleep patterns.
- Food/drink** Drinks with caffeine and foods that are hard to digest can cause the body to be too alert to sleep.
- Medication** Some medicines can make you feel too awake. Check with your GP.
- Getting older** The normal effects of ageing mean that less sleep is needed, or that people tend to doze during the day.

**Disrupted routine**

Changing shift patterns or having a baby can change sleep patterns.

**Pain**

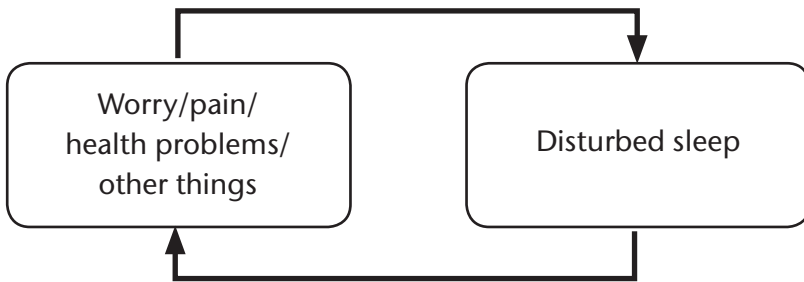
Some medical conditions cause chronic pain, which makes sleeping difficult.

**Bladder problems**

Many people have to get up at night to go to the toilet.

**Not enough exercise**

Lack of exercise can mean your body is not tired enough to need much sleep.

**ESTABLISHING A BETTER SLEEP PATTERN**

There is no quick solution to sleep problems. You have to train yourself and your body to behave in a way that helps you have a good sleep pattern. The best way to get a better night's sleep is to develop a good routine and stick to it. Below are some rules you should try to follow:

- ❖ Use the second half of the evening to unwind. Your mind and body need to rest before you go to bed. Set a deadline for work or activity 90 minutes before bedtime
- ❖ Plan a bedtime that can become a regular time, about eight hours before your alarm will ring the next day

## **Be careful about what you eat and drink for two -three hours before bedtime:**

- ❖ Avoid coffee, tea, hot chocolate, cola, energy drinks or alcohol, as all these can upset your sleep
- ❖ Try caffeine-free drinks: herbal teas (such as camomile), Horlicks and Ovaltine are soothing before bedtime
- ❖ Some foods cause the digestive system to work hard, so try to avoid late night snacks of heavy foods such as cheese, curry or meat
- ❖ If you are a smoker, try to cut down the amount you smoke in the evening
- ❖ Put the **light out** as soon as you are in bed
- ❖ Do not watch television in bed. If you want to watch TV late at night, sit in a chair to do this
- ❖ If you do not fall asleep within **about ½ hour**, get out of bed and relax in another room until you feel tired again. **Repeat this step** as often as you need to
- ❖ Set the alarm to the **same rising time every day**. If you wake up before the alarm, try to lie quietly and enjoy the comfortable feeling of being in bed until you need to get up
- ❖ **Do not nap** during the day
- ❖ **Do not take extra sleep** to make up for a previous bad night. You are trying to retrain your body to a new routine, so keep to your new programme
- ❖ Stick to the programme for **several weeks** in order to set up a regular pattern

## WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU FIRST GET INTO BED

- ❖ Do not try too hard to fall asleep
- ❖ Tell yourself that ‘sleep will come when it is ready’, that ‘relaxing in bed is almost as good’
- ❖ Try to keep your eyes open in the darkened room and, as they (naturally) try to close, tell yourself to ‘resist that for another few seconds’. This approach ‘tempts’ sleep to take over
- ❖ Try counting backwards from 99. If you get lost, start again. (It’s better than counting sheep!)
- ❖ Visualise a pleasing scene or try repeating a neutral word (such as ‘the’) to yourself every few seconds

## DEVELOPING RELAXATION SKILLS

If you start to become anxious about not sleeping, controlling your breathing can be a very good way to make you feel calmer.

### Breathing Exercises

#### **Step 1: breathe out**

**Step 2: breathe in slowly** to the count of four, ‘one elephant, two elephant, three elephant, four elephant’

**Step 3: hold** your breath for a count of four

**Step 4: breathe out slowly** while counting elephants

Repeat these four steps until you begin to feel calm.

Don’t take too many deep breaths in a row or breathe too quickly, or you will become dizzy. Take a few ordinary breaths in between the deep ones.

**Learn to relax:** This series of self-help materials includes a CD for relaxation, with accompanying leaflet. See page nine for how to obtain a free copy of this.

# WORRIES

## Clean Your Head – Ready For Bed

The commonest reason people give for not sleeping is that they lie in bed worrying. One way of dealing with worrying thoughts is to plan your days ahead. Hold a daily planning session, which you use to work through your worries and problems.

This series of self-help materials includes a booklet on worry. See back page for how to obtain a free copy of this.

### **Planning sessions**

- ❖ Set aside 20 minutes in the early evening, after your meal
- ❖ Sit in a quiet room. Have pencil and notebook to hand
- ❖ Think about how the day has gone. Write down the things you achieved
- ❖ Think about problem areas and anything you haven't finished. Write down the way you intend to tackle each of these and when you will do so. Do not do anything about them at this time
- ❖ If these matters are on your mind when you are in bed, put them off until daytime. Remind yourself that you have already written down a plan for the worry
- ❖ If it is a new worry/problem and you cannot stop thinking about it, get out of bed, and add it to your planning list. Remind yourself that bed is not the place to think about such things and that you can do no more. The problem is on your list and you will look at it closely the following day

### **Things to avoid**

- ❖ Drinks with caffeine
- ❖ Heavy food
- ❖ Too much activity too near bedtime
- ❖ Watching TV in bed

## FURTHER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT:

### Useful Contacts

For information on mental services, supports, opportunities or self-help information call:

- ❖ North Lanarkshire: Well Informed 0800 073 0918
- ❖ South Lanarkshire: Lanarkshire Association for Mental Health Information Line: 0330 3000 133

For further information on mental health and well-being, visit Lanarkshire's Elament website: [www.elament.org.uk](http://www.elament.org.uk)

Remember, should your problems persist or you feel you need help urgently please contact your GP. The following organisations can also prove useful in and out of hours.

- ❖ **Breathing Space** - 0800 83 85 87  
(Mon - Thu, 6pm - 2am; Fri 6pm - Mon 6am)  
[www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk](http://www.breathingspacescotland.co.uk)
- ❖ **Samaritans** - 116 123 (24hrs) [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)
- ❖ **NHS24** - 111 (Out of hours) [www.nhs24.com](http://www.nhs24.com)
- ❖ **Healthy Working Lives** - 08452 300 323 (Local),  
0800 019 2211 (National),  
[www.healthyworkinglives.com](http://www.healthyworkinglives.com)
- ❖ **Childline** - 0800 11 11 (24hrs) [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)
- ❖ **NHS Inform** - 0800 22 44 88 [www.nhsinform.co.uk](http://www.nhsinform.co.uk)
- ❖ **Parentline Scotland** - 0808 800 22 22  
[www.children1st.org.uk/parentline](http://www.children1st.org.uk/parentline)
- ❖ **National Debt Line Scotland** - 0808 808 4000  
[www.nationaldebtline.co.uk/scotland](http://www.nationaldebtline.co.uk/scotland)
- ❖ **National Domestic Abuse Helpline** - 0800 027 1234



## WHAT IS WELL CONNECTED?

Well Connected is a new programme in Lanarkshire, sometimes referred to as social prescribing or community referral. It makes it easier for us and people we know to take part in and benefit from activities and services that we know improve our well-being which means how we feel about ourselves and our lives. There are a number of Well Connected areas available to us and we can benefit from more than one:

- ❖ Physical activity and leisure opportunities
- ❖ Volunteering
- ❖ Employment
- ❖ Arts and culture
- ❖ Benefits, welfare and debt advice
- ❖ Learning opportunities
- ❖ Stress Control Classes in communities
- ❖ Health Walks
- ❖ Mindfulness Classes.

For information on any of the above call:

- ❖ North Lanarkshire: Well Informed 0800 073 0918
- ❖ South Lanarkshire: Lanarkshire Association for Mental Health Information Line: 0330 3000 133
- ❖ Visit: [www.elament.org.uk/self-help-resources/well-connected-programme.aspx](http://www.elament.org.uk/self-help-resources/well-connected-programme.aspx)

## HEALTHY READING

All public libraries have a healthy reading section making it easier to access mental health and well-being leaflets, books, CDs, DVDs and web-based support. All libraries across Lanarkshire have resources to help us get the most from life such as living life to the full, sleeping better and becoming more confident or overcoming and coping with mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, stress, dementia and panic. There are also resources for all ages including supporting young people, adults and older people as well as items on positive parenting. Simply pop into your local library.

## GUIDED SUPPORT:

### Stress Control Classes

Stress Control classes will help develop skills and techniques to manage common issues caused by modern day living such as stress, anxiety or low confidence.

The classes are delivered in local community facilities and consist of six sessions lasting 90 minutes each. We will not need to speak about our issues during the class. Just sit back and listen about helpful stress control techniques. Feel free to bring someone along with you for support. To find your nearest class and book a place, call **0300 303 0447**.

### Living Life to the Full - Online Course

Living Life to The Full is a free web-based life skills course that aims to help us tackle and respond to issues/demands which we all meet in our everyday lives. It will explore issues such as understanding why we feel the way we do, problem solving, noticing and challenging unhelpful thoughts and behaviours and anxiety control. You can register for the course at **[www.lltff.com](http://www.lltff.com)** and complete as many or as few modules as you wish.

If you feel you need additional help, the Living Life to The Full course is also available with support from self help coaches (via Action on Depression Scotland). To find out more visit **[www.aod.lltffionline.co.uk](http://www.aod.lltffionline.co.uk)**

### Living Life: Guided Self Help and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy - Telephone Support

Living Life is a free telephone support service for people suffering from low mood, mild to moderate depression, symptoms of anxiety or a combination of both. Trained Self-help coaches and therapists will guide us through a range of workbooks over a series of telephone sessions. For more information or to make a telephone appointment, call **0800 328 9655** (Mon–Fri 1–9pm).

**NHS Lanarkshire** - for local services and the latest health news visit [www.nhslanarkshire.org.uk](http://www.nhslanarkshire.org.uk)  
NHS Lanarkshire General Enquiry Line: 0300 3030 243

**NHS inform** - The national health information service for Scotland. [www.nhsinform.co.uk](http://www.nhsinform.co.uk)  
Tel No: 0800 22 44 88

If you need this information in another language or format, please contact the NHS Lanarkshire General Enquiry Line on 0300 3030 243 or e-mail [info2@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:info2@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk)



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

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