

Factsheet

10 BEHAVIOURS TO AVOID



1

Sleeping in an overheated room

Remember that the air in a bedroom should be around 18 degrees. Remember, too, that you can always add extra layers if you feel the temperature is too cold.

2

Using screens

As you no doubt know, screens not only make us lose track of time and excite our need for movement and visual stimulation, they can also disrupt our natural sleep cycle by inhibiting the release of the sleep hormone in our brains. Screens are part of our daily lives, but they should be used sparingly in the evening, and stopped about 1 hour before our usual bedtime.

3

Substance abuse

Psychoactive substances act on the brain: this obviously includes alcohol, cannabis and drugs in general, but also nicotine from tobacco, coffee, tea and medication. Moderate alcohol consumption may help you fall asleep, but sleep may be lighter and less restful. Cannabis and other drugs can have both sedative and stimulating effects: in both cases, sleep may not be fully restorative. Beware of tobacco and tea, which are stimulants and should not be consumed by sensitive people after 6 p.m.: opt for decaffeinated or herbal tea!

4

Doing sport in the evening

Physical activity is universally recommended for its beneficial effects on the metabolism (to help maintain a slim figure), energy levels (anti-fatigue action) and mood (anti-depressive action). However, physical activity tends to raise the body temperature. It should therefore be avoided in the evening, especially as bedtime approaches. That's why advice to « get tired » by exercising to speed up sleep is actually counter-productive. Lowering the body's activity level prepares it for rest.

5 Eating too much or too little/Eating too much fat

Food plays a role in sleep quality: on the one hand, a meal that's too light can induce a feeling of hunger that makes it difficult to fall asleep. On the other hand, a meal that's too hearty or too fatty can contribute to a feeling of heaviness and discomfort. In addition, digestion increases body temperature, and so can alter sleep.

6 Don't drink/Drink too much

We often forget it, but drinking is essential. Drinking enough helps limit the risk of waking up in the middle of the night to quench your thirst. On the other hand, drinking too much just before going to bed (especially draining herbal teas...) can increase the risk of waking up in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom. In practice, don't eat too much salt or sugar in the evening (to limit the sensation of thirst), and drink a glass of water before going to bed, for example.

7 Brooding

The evening and night are prime times for brooding, rehashing negative ideas about the day's events or anxiously anticipating future ones. Anxieties about sleep itself may also occur: will it be restful? Will you wake up again tonight? Will this have an impact on your lessons tomorrow? How are you going to cope? These thoughts can arise naturally, and it's absolutely not your fault. If these thoughts are occasional, go to the tools section to find exercises for refocusing on the present moment.

8 Taking a shower that's too hot

Taking a shower in the evening can help you relax (in addition to washing). However, be careful not to expose yourself to water that's too hot, or your body will store this heat and retain it for part of the night. Set the shower at a lukewarm temperature and don't exceed 5 minutes.

9

Naps that are too long

Most of the time, a short nap is quite beneficial to help recharge your batteries, but on the other hand, it's not about finishing your night! We're talking about a maximum of 20 minutes to avoid the risk of falling into a deep sleep and subsequently provoking what's known as « sleep intoxication » (difficulty waking up and paradoxical tiredness). Another risk is to delay bedtime (« phase shift »). Naps can therefore be taken in the afternoon, after lunchtime, for example, when alertness levels are typically lower. You don't have to sleep; closing your eyes and relaxing can be enough.

10

Make up for short nights with longer nights

We spontaneously think it's the right thing to do: sleep longer the next night when we slept little or badly the night before.

In reality, a lack of sleep can be made up over several days. Sleeping longer the next night (for example, sleeping 10 hours when you normally sleep an average of 7) will only disorganise your sleep cycle even more. In practice, it's better to get up at the usual time, and take micro-naps during the day if you feel the need.

