

## IMPROVING OUR SLEEP DURING COVID-19

Whilst many of us will be aware of the physical aspects that a lack of sleep can have on us such as tiredness, yawning and fatigue, there are a number of mental health concerns to be mindful of that poor sleeping habits can produce such as depression and anxiety.

Whilst we are living through these challenging times, we may experience issues with nodding off. It is even more important at the moment for us to take care of our mental and physical wellbeing and sleep is a significant part of that. Here are a few of our top tips.

### 1. Sleep at regular times

Most adults need between 6 – 9 hours of sleep every night. It is tempting to let the current circumstances distract us from a routine and going to bed at our usual time. By sticking to a regular bedtime schedule, we can help our internal body clock maintain a routine. This will be beneficial to us when we are ready to return to work.

If you are lying awake unable to sleep, don't force it. Instead, get up and do something relaxing and return to bed when you feel sleepier.

### 2. Increase exposure to natural light

Natural sunlight or bright light during the day helps keep our circadian rhythm healthy, which in turn, has positive effects on our mental health.

With the lighter, brighter days that we are currently enjoying, let's take advantage of that by going outside once a day for a relaxing walk or any other activity which makes you feel good. One of the most effective ways to improve sleep is exercise. Exercise can help relieve any tension and relax your mind.

### 3. Create a sleep friendly space

Making our bedrooms into a relaxing and calming environment whilst optimising the noise and temperature levels to suit our needs and avoiding blue light exposure will aid a good night's sleep. Blue light exposure can trick our bodies into thinking it is daytime e.g. smartphones, TV's and laptops. Dark, quiet and cool environments generally make it easier to fall asleep and stay asleep.

Separating our sleep from our work will also help us switch off at the end of the day. Working on your laptop on your bed may sound comfortable, but when the time comes to sleep, you may find it harder to switch off. Creating a designated work area in your home will help maintain a healthy work life balance.

### 4. Write down your worries

If you often lie awake worrying about things that are on your mind, it can help to write your worries down before bed. This can help to put your mind at rest for the night and allow you to address your worries the following day.

### 5. Relax

Before you go to bed, try doing an activity that helps you switch off. This could include a warm bath, reading a book or a meditation session.

If you would like to find out more information on improving your sleep or any other wellbeing issues, please contact the Health Assured confidential helpline on **0800 030 5182** where professionally trained counsellors are available to take your call and provide confidential advice and support on any issue that may be concerning you. There is no cost to you for accessing the service.