

# Getting the sleep you need

fact sheet

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## Are you feeling constantly tired? Not getting enough sleep? Waking up during the night?

Several things can disrupt our regular sleep patterns. These include being sick, in pain, stressed, anxious or depressed. Depression, in particular, can lead to:

- Finding it hard to get to sleep
- Sleeping badly
- Sleeping less than you normally would
- Waking up during the night
- Waking up early in the morning and not being able to get back to sleep.

Sleep is important for all of us, to help our bodies recover and recharge.

When it comes down to it, it's not the total length of sleep that really matters. It's how good the sleep is for your body and whether you're getting what doctors call 'deep sleep' that makes the difference.

Deep sleep usually occurs during the first five hours of the night. (So if you only sleep for four or five hours, you'll get as much deep sleep as someone who's sleeping for eight to ten hours).

If you don't get enough sleep, you might:

- Be tired during the day
- Find it hard to concentrate
- Be moody or easily annoyed
- Have aching muscles
- Get sick easier or more often
- Find it difficult to recover from depression.

## Tips to improve your sleep

There are lots of things you can do to improve the quality of your sleep.

### When you wake up:

- Get up and out of bed as soon as you can - don't go back to sleep or try to make up for lost time
- Try and get up at the same time each morning, perhaps around 7am-7.30am
- Go outside in the fresh air and/or do something active.

### During the day:

- Don't nap. Napping will make you less tired when you go to bed, which means it'll take you longer to fall asleep
- Make time during the day to sort out the problems that you might worry about at night
- Keep a "sleep-wake diary", which lists the hours you've been asleep and awake
- Try to be more active in the early morning or late afternoon (while the sun is still up)
- Avoid drinks that contain caffeine after about 4.00pm (coffee, strong tea, coke, etc). Also avoid drinking more than two of these drinks per day.

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## Going to bed:

- Avoid drinking alcohol or smoking before you go to bed. Alcohol may cause you to sleep less deeply and wake up more often. Smoking may put you on edge so you'll find it hard to get to sleep
- Give yourself time to wind down before going to bed. Stop studying or working at least 30 minutes beforehand
- Avoid watching TV or reading in bed, as this may make you restless when you try to sleep
- Avoid taking sleeping pills. If you do need them, try not to take them for more than a week because they can be addictive
- Get yourself into a routine that you can follow every night before going to bed - for example, having a bath or shower, then putting on your pyjamas, then brushing your teeth
- Try to make your bedroom quiet, dim and cool
- Avoid too many blankets or using electric blankets. If you're too hot, you don't go into deep sleep and you're more likely to have disturbing dreams.

## Where to get help:

If you want to chat about how you're feeling, or you've got any questions, you can;

**Text** The Lowdown team for free on 5626

**Email** The Lowdown team in the Chat section of [www.thelowdown.co.nz](http://www.thelowdown.co.nz). You can also ask them to give you a call back if you want to talk on the phone.

**Call** the Depression Helpline on 0800 111 757

If you have tried everything but your sleep patterns are still a problem, talk to your GP or other health professional.