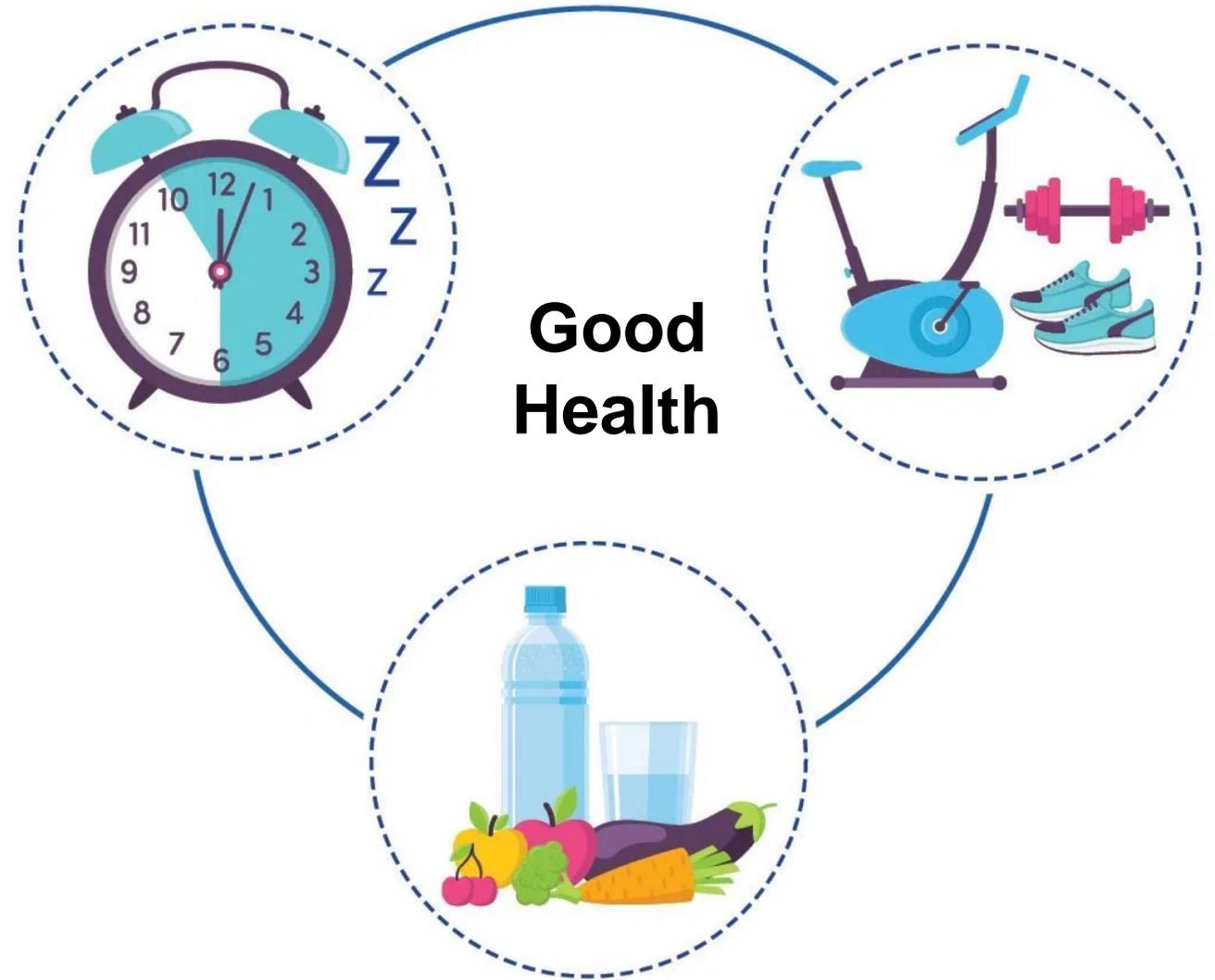


Getting a good night's sleep

Dr. Natalie Grima, August 2020



Why is sleep important?



Support your body clock and daily rhythms

Getting a good night's sleep starts with supporting your body clock and daily rhythms.

Sleep is controlled by biological, social and environmental time-keepers.

Getting a good night's sleep starts with making sure you prioritize and regularize sleep, timed exposure of light and meals, being substance wise, as well as scheduling exercise, and social interaction.



Sleep hygiene

- Sleep hygiene is often prescribed as the first line treatment to address sleeping difficulties, though sleep hygiene is not a cure.
- Sleep hygiene is a set of tools designed to tidy-up sleep, and to optimize sleep.
- Healthy sleep habits can minimize the impact of social isolation on sleep.



Source: www.theguardian.com



Sleep hygiene – Routine and light exposure

Establish a regular bedtime

Go to bed at approximately the same time each night.

When working well you will feel a 'wave' of sleepiness.

Try not to ignore your bedtime & 'surf the waves' of sleepiness and 'catch it' as your bedtime helps you fall asleep quickly.

Wake up at the same time

Expose yourself to bright light in morning at around the same time.

Exposure to bright light in the morning will improve alertness, and offset morning grogginess.

Do not attempt sleep when you are fully alert, awake or distressed

If it is your bedtime and you are feeling this way, take more time to unwind out of bed.

Be kind to yourself & ride the 'wave' of sleepiness when it comes.



Sleep hygiene – Setting boundaries

Say goodnight to personal electronics

Avoid screen time at least 2 hours before bedtime.

Evening light exposure will impact your body's production of melatonin.

Activate the 'blue light filter' on your electronic device.

Establish an evening 'buffer zone' to unwind

Deactivate your 'doing' and 'goal-directed' self into your 'relaxed' zone.

Unwind at least 1 to 2 hour before bed.

Engage in non-goal directed, pleasurable activities.

Bed is for sleep & not wake activities

Utilizing the bed for activities other than sleep could trick your brain into thinking the bed is a place for waking activities and NOT sleep.

The bed should only be used for sleeping



Sleep hygiene – Be substance wise

Reduce evening alcohol intake

Alcohol may help you initiate sleep, but it affects your body's ability to get into rapid eye movement sleep (i.e., REM sleep).

As a rule of thumb, it takes about an hour to metabolize one unit of alcohol. 1 glass of wine (250ml) has 3 units of alcohol.

Avoid caffeinated beverages at least 6 hours before bedtime

Half of the caffeine in your beverage is still in your system up to 6 hours after consumption which can impact your body to initiate sleep.

Avoid caffeine after 1pm.

Avoid eating too close to your regular bedtime

Eating meals at the same serves as a time-keeper which helps tune your body clock.

Avoid heavy meals close to your bedtime.



Sleep hygiene – Daily activities

Exercise and engage in incidental exercise

Exercise can help build 'sleep pressure' and has positive effects on mood and general wellbeing.

Try to exercise at the same time.

Avoid intense, vigorous exercise at least 2 hours before bedtime.

Make social interaction a part of your day

Prioritize and schedule-in social interaction with family and friends.

Schedule a quick 'hello' with family and friends on a regular basis.

Keep day-time and night-time activities different

Our body clock benefits from keeping day and night distinguished.

During the day, keep living space full of light and be active.

In the evening, engage in quieter activities.



6 Strategies to remedy your sleep

Having some nights when you don't sleep well during a stressful period is normal. For most people, sleep will settle back to its usual rhythm. However, if you encounter difficulties getting to sleep and/or staying asleep consider the following strategies.

1. Review and amend your sleep hygiene habits

2. Limit media exposure

- If COVID-19 and news worthy material puts you at unease or makes you stressed, consider updating yourself during the day.
- Set app time limits on your phone (this is available for both iPhones and Androids).
- Choose **trusted sources** for COVID-19 updates.

3. Relax your body to quiet your mind

- Practice relaxation strategies such as meditation, yoga, deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation.
- Actively practice relaxation during the day and in the evening – refer to Dr. Sika Turner presentation '*Practical tools for anxiety management in your daily work*'
- If worries are impacting your sleep, write down your worries, and plan how you will address your worries. It is preferable to do this a few hours before going to bed, and consider problem-solving with someone you trust.



6 Strategies to remedy your sleep

4. **Get up at the same time, regardless of how much sleep you had**

- It sounds counter intuitive, however, staying in bed longer and past your usual wake-up time to make-up for sleep loss could negatively impact your sleep the following night.
- Our body can make up sleep loss by sleeping deeper, which is as important as sleeping longer.

5. **If you find yourself tossing and turning in bed, take a break and get out of bed**

- Tossing and turning in bed usually results in frustration and anxiety which is at odds with sleep. The harder you try to sleep, the more sleep becomes elusive.
- Take a break and get out of bed. Cool your body down, engage in a relaxing, non-goal directed task under dim light and ride the sleep wave when it comes.



6 Strategies to remedy your sleep

6. Seek professional help

- If your sleep problems persist for a while, happening more days than not, severely interfere with your day, or you are concerned, it is a good idea to consult with your GP, and consider a referral to a sleep physician.
- There are many non-pharmacological treatments available.
- If you suffer from insomnia or encounter difficulties with managing your sleep/wake schedule you could benefit from working with a sleep physician and a sleep psychologist.
- Contact our free and confidential Monash Health Psychologists Hotline for personalized advice.



Call 0418 905 414

9am – 5pm, Monday to Friday

EAP 1300 687 327