

# SLEEP WELL

## Why is sleep important?

Sleep is a necessity for functioning, like food and water. During sleep, our body has an opportunity to rest, process the day, and to regulate the chemicals and hormones needed for us to feel stable. When we sleep well, our body feels better, and our mind is more balanced. However, having a tough time with sleep can have a significant impact. It can lead us to feel tired, cranky, and overwhelmed. This can make everyday tasks more challenging.

## Common difficulties people have with sleep.

- ◆ Sleeping all day but still feeling tired.
- ◆ Struggling to fall asleep due to a racing mind.
- ◆ Waking up multiple times throughout the night.
- ◆ Struggling with bad dreams and waking up feeling exhausted.
- ◆ Sleeping during the day and staying up at night.
- ◆ Being able to fall asleep, but waking up earlier than expected and struggling to fall back asleep.

### Activity: My Sleep Snapshot

On average I get \_\_\_\_\_ hours of sleep per night.

I tend to go to bed at \_\_\_\_\_ and wake up at \_\_\_\_\_.

It usually takes me \_\_\_\_\_ to get to sleep.

On average I wake up \_\_\_\_\_ times a night.

When I wake up I usually feel \_\_\_\_\_.

Out of 10 (10 being amazing!) I would say the quality of my sleep is \_\_\_\_ /10.

#### Reflect

- ◆ What did you notice when filling out your Sleep Snapshot?
- ◆ How could struggling to have a decent sleep affect your life (such as your studies, personal life, relationships etc)?
- ◆ How could struggling to have a decent sleep affect your resilience (your ability to cope with stress and bounce back from adversity)?
- ◆ Do I need to improve my sleep routine?
- ◆ What am I doing in the hours before I go to bed?
- ◆ What am I doing to prepare myself to go to sleep?

## Tips for improving sleep

### IF YOU DO THIS

Eat or drink stimulants (e.g. coffee, tea, drinks with caffeine, drugs, alcohol, sugar)

Look at bright screens (they stimulate your brain and keep you from feeling tired)

Stress (it can lead you to overthink and struggle to wind down)

Engage in little to no activity (having a sedentary lifestyle can mean you haven't used enough mental/physical energy during the day)

Nap (it can lead to a reverse sleep cycle/being nocturnal)

### TRY THIS INSTEAD

Limit stimulants at least four hours before sleep

Limit screen time for 30 minutes to an hour before bed. Try reading instead.

Incorporate relaxation activities as part of your wind-down time before bed.

Gentle exercise and keeping busy during the day

Minimise napping during the day

## Lifestyle tips that can help with sleep.

- ◆ **Keep busy and exercise:** Try the gym, yoga, walks, swimming, dancing.
- ◆ **Eat well:** Fuel your body and try to eat nourishing and balanced meals.
- ◆ **Set yourself a bedtime:** Your body gets used to waking up and sleeping at the same time.
- ◆ **Sleep when sleepy:** If you lie awake for longer than 20 minutes, do something relaxing. Go and read elsewhere and return to the room.
- ◆ **Associate your bed with sleep:** Avoid using your bed to study or hang out.
- ◆ **Make your environment cozy:** Keep your room clean and tidy, adjust the temperature, have warm blankets or a fan, and make sure the room is dark enough.
- ◆ **Engage in relaxation activities before bed:** This can include a warm shower, reading a good book, drinking a caffeine-free drink, gentle stretches, soothing music, and focusing on your breathing.
- ◆ **Keep a journal:** This is a helpful technique for managing runaway thoughts at nighttime.
- ◆ **Download sleep apps:** They can be useful for measuring quality of sleep and can feature things like soothing music or guided meditations for bed.

## Who can I contact for more support?

VU's Counselling Service provides free professional services to enrolled students that are designed to support you in your personal, psychological, academic, and social development. To book an appointment, call 9919 5400 and have a look at our webpage: [vu.edu.au/counselling](https://vu.edu.au/counselling)

The Student Health Advisor at VU is available to provide health-related advice, information and referrals. To book, please email [healthadvice@vu.edu.au](mailto:healthadvice@vu.edu.au) and check out the webpage for more information [vu.edu.au/health-advice](https://vu.edu.au/health-advice)

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Brief interventions in youth mental health toolkit. Orygen, The National Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health 2016