

# Secrets to a good night's sleep revealed

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## SECRETS TO A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP REVEALED AS BRITS GET JUST SIX HOURS A NIGHT

Those in the North East revealed to sleep soundest whilst people in Greater London have the worst sleep hygiene

Press Release

5 April 2022

With new research finding that the average UK adult spends just six hours of the day asleep, experts are warning that millions of Brits are at risk of potentially serious health conditions including obesity, heart disease and diabetes.

The research conducted by healthcare provider, Benenden Health, also found that more than two thirds of the nation (68%) are failing to get the recommended amount of at least seven hours, with stress, loud noises, uncomfortable temperatures and going to bed too late the most common factors.

Nationwide, those in the North East and Scotland reported having the most sleep per day, whilst individuals in Greater London are failing to get even six hours on average.

- 1) North East: 6.39 hours
- 2) Scotland: 6.38 hours
- 3) East Midlands: 6.35 hours
- 4) South East: 6.35 hours
- 5) South West: 6.32 hours
- 6) North West: 6.3 hours
- 7) Yorkshire & The Humber: 6.25 hours
- 8) UK average: 6.24 hours
- 9) West Midlands: 6.22 hours
- 10) East of England: 6.19 hours
- 11) Northern Ireland: 6.13 hours
- 12) Wales: 6.13 hours
- 13) Greater London: 5.89 hours

To help alleviate the danger of developing physical conditions associated with a lack of sleep, Benenden Health is encouraging individuals to consider how they approach their sleeping habits by sharing its own advice on how to get the best night's sleep.

Matron at Benenden Health, Cheryl Lythgoe, said: "Whilst individuals may feel like they can operate off the bare minimum amount of sleep, our research has highlighted an epidemic of insufficient sleep across the UK.

"Many of us know the positive impact that sleep can have on our mental wellbeing, but it's incredibly

important for our physical wellbeing too, so making small changes to our lifestyle and investing more time in ourselves can be hugely beneficial to our overall health.”

Cheryl's top tips for a good night's sleep:

#### 1. Establish a relaxing sleeping routine

Take some time out to wind down before you go to bed. Activities like reading or taking a warm bath can help you separate your sleep-time from what's been going on in your everyday life.

#### 2. Clear the mind

With stress and anxiety the leading cause of poor sleep, doing what you can to alleviate excessive stresses can help you relax into a good night's sleep – for example, it may be worth writing a “to do” list for the following day to clear your mind about any stress or anxiety you may be feeling.

#### 3. Optimise your sleeping environment

To maximise the quality of your sleep, avoid working in your bedroom if possible as this may stop you from ‘winding down’. Remove digital equipment to avoid checking it if you wake up as this often makes it more difficult to go back to sleep and ensure your room is at optimum temperature – aiming for it to be between 18-21 degrees Celsius.

#### 4. No napping – only sleep!

If you are having trouble sleeping at night, avoid catching up with naps as this can make the body less ‘ready’ for sleep when the time arrives.

If you feel like you are getting tired during the day, stand up and take a walk, get some fresh air or do something that will challenge your brain for a while, such as a jigsaw or a puzzle app.

#### 5. Avoid stimulants before sleeping

The effects of stimulants can take hours to wear off and can have a big impact on how quickly you fall to sleep and the quality of it when you do.

Nicotine and caffeine cause your heart rate and alertness to increase meaning that you feel more awake before you go to sleep, whilst alcohol can disrupt you later in the night and won't allow you to fall into the deep sleep that you need.

For more information about Benenden Health and to discover more advice on getting a good night's sleep, go to <https://www.benenden.co.uk/be-healthy/body/how-to-get-a-good-nights-sleep/>.

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Note to Editors

Survey carried out on 2,065 adults in the UK by Censuswide in March 2022.

Full tips to aid sleep from Matron at Benenden Health, Cheryl Lythgoe:

#### 1. Establish a relaxing sleeping routine

Take some time out to wind down before you go to bed. Activities like reading or taking a warm bath, can help you separate your sleep-time from what's been going on in your everyday life.

Though being active throughout the day promotes a better night's sleep, you should avoid excess physical activity in the 1-2 hours leading to bedtime to allow the body to relax.

#### 2. Clear the mind

With stress and anxiety the leading cause of poor sleep, doing what you can to alleviate excessive stresses can help you relax into a good night's sleep – for example, it may be worth writing a “to do” list for the following day so you can organise your thoughts and clear your mind about any stress or anxiety you may be feeling about the next day.

#### 3. Optimise your sleeping environment

Ensure your bedroom is the perfect place to get a good night's kip. Firstly, be sure to avoid working in your bedroom if you are still working remotely. Associating your bedroom with a workplace may stop you from 'winding down' when you do want to go to sleep on an evening.

Remove digital equipment from your bedroom to avoid checking it if you wake up as they can make it more difficult to go back to sleep. You could try using an old-fashioned alarm clock instead of your phone to remove this temptation.

You should also make sure your room is at optimum temperature – aiming for it to be between 18-21 degrees Celsius – and make sure your bedroom has good blackout blinds, as unwanted light may disrupt your sleep cycle.

#### 4. No napping – only sleep!

If you are having trouble sleeping at night, you could be tempted to catch up with naps when you finish work on an evening. The more you do nap, the less likely your body will be 'ready' for sleep when the time arrives to.

If you feel like you are getting tired during the day, stand up and take a walk, get some fresh air or do

something that will challenge your brain for a while, such as a crossword or word search.

#### 5. Avoid stimulants before sleeping

The effects of stimulants can take hours to wear off and can have a big impact on how quickly you fall to sleep and the quality of it when you do.

Nicotine causes your heart rate and alertness to increase meaning that you feel more awake before you go to sleep. Nicotine enters the bloodstream within a few minutes but after a few hours it will begin to leave your body and due to its addictiveness, your brain will wake you up for more nicotine causing a more disruptive night.

Alcohol may make you feel drowsy, but it can disrupt you later in the night and won't allow you to fall into the deep sleep that you need. Avoid caffeinated drinks like tea and coffee before bed, however some studies suggest that malty drinks or warm milk could aid sleep.

#### About Benenden Health

Benenden Health is a not-for-profit organisation, founded in 1905 with the purpose of people joining together to help pay for medical care. It is one of the UK's longest serving and most respected mutual healthcare societies, offering an affordable alternative to health insurance to more than 820,000 members.

Many UK businesses have also chosen to offer Benenden Health membership as part of their employee benefits package.

Further data from the survey is available on request.