



Improving Sleep

1. 8 hours of sleep is a myth. All brains and bodies are different!
2. Everyone has their own sleep needs, and those needs change for each of us during the year.
3. Sleep hygiene is only useful for prevention of sleep issues, it is not an intervention for insomnia!
4. Trying to establish a 'perfect' or overly rigid routine is more likely to increase anxiety and worsen insomnia.
5. Nobody actually sleeps 'through the night'. Healthy sleepers have deeper and lighter periods of sleep, and periods of near-wakefulness each night.
6. Again, being too fixated on the 'right' way to sleep can worsen anxiety and be the very thing that *stops us* getting back to sleep.
7. Generally speaking, sleep as much as your body needs. If you're tired, go to bed. If you're not tired, do something else until you're tired.
8. Restless mind? Do something with your body. Restless body? Do something with your mind.
9. Need a nap in the afternoon? Keep it under 45 minutes, and ideally about 30 minutes.
10. Everyone has a different daily rhythm for rest and wakefulness. Some are early risers and wake energised and ready to go. Others start slow and find energy and clarity later in the evenings. Where possible, work to these natural patterns.
11. Learn to differentiate between 'tired' and 'sleepy'. A common mistake is to go to bed when 'tired', and then end up laying there, feeling thoughts racing in the mind. These thoughts require energy to propagate and maintain and probably mean you're 'tired' but not yet 'sleepy'. Take some quiet(ish) time to yourself and try again when you're feeling 'sleepy'. When we're sleepy, there's no energy for racing thoughts to feed on, and sleep will happen.
12. You can't force your brain to sleep. Trying will almost always have the opposite effect.
13. Dangers of 'doing' and 'over-doing it'. Days are for doing. Nights are for being, resting, enjoying, connecting.
14. Clear your head, then go to bed: write it down or talk it out if you can't get it out of your mind.
15. Feelings aren't facts – having a 'bad night's sleep' won't kill you. Don't let your tired mind agitate itself over the 'what ifs' of tomorrow.
16. Endless scrolling on your phone will not help you get to sleep.

Age bracket of the individual		Hours recommended
Newborns	0-3 months	14-17 hours
Infants	4-11 months	12-15 hours
Toddlers	1-2 years	11-14 hours
Preschoolers	3-5 years	10-13 hours
School-age	6-13 years	9-11 hours
Teens	14-17 years	8-10 hours
Adults	18-64 years	7-9 hours
Older Adults	>65 years	7-8 hours