

Sleep is important

Good sleep is essential for normal health and development. It refreshes the mind and repairs the body. Having a good sleep helps with tiredness, pain, energy levels and positive thinking. Unfortunately, there is evidence to show that children and young people with rheumatologic conditions such as juvenile idiopathic arthritis and Lupus are more likely to feel fatigued (extremely tired) and/or have poor sleep.

What is the impact of poor sleep?

Tiredness can make you feel sad and frustrated. You may have mood swings, be more irritable and have difficulty concentrating and remembering things.

Research has shown that being short of sleep can affect the immune system. Lack of sleep places your body under stress and can increase inflammation.

You can also become more sensitive to pain. Pain or discomfort can affect your sleep, and a cycle can develop where tiredness then makes the pain worse. Pain messages to the brain become stronger and you may find it difficult to think about and concentrate on other things. This worsened pain then affects your sleep and so on. Medication to control pain is important, but getting enough sleep also helps your body manage pain better.

How much sleep is enough?

The amount of sleep you need can vary from person to person. It is important to know how much sleep you need, and that this can change. Teenagers usually need between 8 and 10 hours of sleep a night.

If you feel tired all the time, have trouble waking, feel irritable or anxious, have mood swings, and/or have difficulty concentrating, remembering, learning and interacting socially, you could need more sleep.

What can I do?

Sleep better and sleep more. Depending on how tired you are, this can take a few days or several weeks to get better. Good sleep habits (also called sleep hygiene) are things that you can do to have the best chance of a good, refreshing sleep. If sleep becomes a significant problem, medicines can sometimes be prescribed and this can be discussed with your doctor.

Further Information

Further information about sleep hygiene is easy to find online. These links take you to sites with more information:

<https://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/healthy-living/food-activity-and-sleep/sleeping/helping-teenagers-sleep-better>

<https://www.kidshealth.org.nz/parenting-teens-sleep-needs-teenagers>

Tips to sleeping better

Get regular

Go to bed and wake up at about the same time (within an hour), even weekends.

Bed is for sleeping

Keep your bedroom cool (19 – 20°C), dark and quiet. Try not to use your bedroom for anything other than sleep so that your body associates bed with sleep.

Develop a sleep ritual

This helps your body to know when it's time for sleep. Find something relaxing that you can include as part of getting ready for bed. Allow at least half an hour of quiet time before bed.

If your mind is busy when you are in bed, try to read a book or listen to relaxing music. If your mind is still racing, try writing down your thoughts on a note pad - they will still be there in the morning.

Avoid overstimulation

'Blue screen' activities such as watching television, cell phones, tablets and computers before bed stimulate your brain and should be avoided for at least 30 mins before bed. Avoid caffeine after 2pm (this includes energy and cola drinks). Smoking and alcohol can also affect sleep.

Daytime is wake time

When you wake, expose yourself to at least 15 mins of sunlight. Avoid daytime naps. If they are needed, limit naps to less than an hour and before 3pm.

Keep active

Keep busy during the day, and exercise regularly. This helps your body know when it's wake time and tires you, making it easier to sleep.

Getting started to better sleep

Find out how much sleep you need:

Start Date:

My tiredness/10 (0 none, 10 very tired)

I go to bed atpm. I wake up atam.

I usually get hours sleep/night

Use the tips above and work on going to bed 15-30 mins earlier every night until you wake at the desired time without an alarm.

Finish Date (2 weeks later)

My tiredness/10 (0 none, 10 very tired)

I go to bed atpm. I wake up atam.

I usually get hours sleep/night

I need hours/night to feel awake

Things that help me sleep well:

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