

# The secrets of sleep

Getting a good night's sleep will help you feel refreshed, happy and healthy.



Children need more sleep than adults.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Babies sleep for around 17 hours each day.

**H**ave you ever wondered why you spend so much of your life asleep? Just like electricity charges the battery of a mobile phone, sleep recharges your body and your mind.

### What is sleep?

Sleep is a natural and temporary state of rest, brought on by your "body clock" – a system inside your brain that helps you sleep at night and wake up in the morning. Even though you are not aware of your surroundings when you sleep, your brain remains active.

### Why do people need to sleep?

Humans could not function without sleep. According to the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, sleep helps people learn by strengthening their memories. It has physical benefits too – like maintaining a healthy weight and boosting your immune system (the body's ability to fight bugs, protecting you against infections). Too little sleep can make you tired and grumpy. Your brain becomes foggy, making it difficult to concentrate and make decisions. That's why you may be told to "sleep on" a choice you're uncertain about.



Sleeping well can improve your mood.

### What are dreams?

Dreams usually occur during a stage of sleep known as rapid eye movement (REM) sleep. In REM, the eyes move quickly back and forth and brain activity increases. Scientists are not sure why people dream. Some say it is a process that helps store memories; others say it helps people process emotions. Everybody dreams for around two hours a night but not everyone can remember them.

### How much sleep do I need?

Doctors say sleep is especially important for children and teenagers because their minds and bodies are still developing. Most adults need around eight hours of sleep, but Mandy Gurney, who runs the Millpond Children's Sleep Clinic, says that children need more. "An eight-year-old requires around 10 to 10-and-a-half hours of sleep each

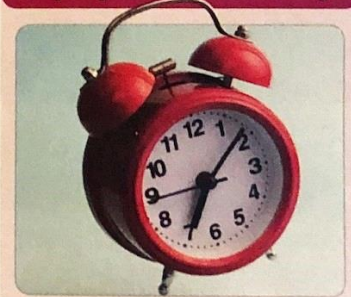
night, dropping to around nine hours a night in your teen years." A good night's sleep will get your day off to a great start. As Mahatma Gandhi, who was an Indian politician and activist, is quoted as saying, "When I wake up, I am reborn."

### Having trouble sleeping?

If you're struggling to sleep, try these tips to help you drift off:

- Write down any thoughts or worries you have, to get them out of your head and onto paper. Keep a notepad and pen by your bed, just in case you need them.
- Download an app, such as Doze, which plays soothing music and tells stories. You can set a timer so that the sound stops after you fall asleep: [dozeapp.com](http://dozeapp.com)

### Top tips for good sleep



- **Routine**  
Waking up and going to bed at the same time every day helps to maintain your body clock. Taking an hour before bed to wind down can help prepare you for sleep. Try having a bath, listening to relaxing music or reading a book. Avoid looking at electronic devices.
- **Exercise**  
Being active tires you out, which in turn will help you sleep. It's best to exercise during the day, so you don't feel too energised at night.
- **Diet**  
Avoid drinks with caffeine (a substance that makes your brain more active). Caffeine can be found in coffee and tea, fizzy drinks (including energy drinks) and chocolate.