

# How headspace can help

## headspace is here to help

**headspace centres across Australia provide face-to-face information, support and services to young people, aged 12 to 25 years, and their families and friends.**

headspace can help you with:



### Mental health and wellbeing

headspace can help if you're experiencing significant changes in thoughts, feelings and/or behaviour, if you're being bullied, hurt or harassed or just not feeling yourself.



### General health

headspace has youth friendly general practitioners (GPs) and health nurses who can help with any physical health issues. A GP can also help you with issues related to contraception, sexual health, drug or alcohol use, relationship problems or feeling down or upset.



### Alcohol and other drug services

If drugs and alcohol are starting to affect things that matter to you, like your mental health, wellbeing or friendships, headspace can help.



### Work, school and study

headspace work and study specialists can help you if you're struggling at school, unsure what course you want to do, need a hand writing a resume, or if you are searching for a job.

Online and telephone support is also available through eheadspace. (There is more information about eheadspace over the page.)

## headspace centres



headspace centres help you to access the type of health worker you need. This could be a GP, psychologist, social worker, alcohol and drug worker, counsellor, vocational worker or youth worker. A number of centres also have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers, welfare workers and family therapists.

You can visit a headspace centre no matter how big or small your problem may seem.

## Making an appointment at headspace

It's as simple as phoning or emailing your nearest headspace centre to find a time that suits you. You can also ask a friend, teacher, parent, other family member, health worker or community agency to contact headspace for you.

Your local headspace centre might also have a 'drop in' service where you can visit anytime in their visiting hours. Call your nearest headspace centre or check out [headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au) to find out more about what services are available.



## Aged between 12-25 years?

headspace can help if you:

Are feeling down, stressed or can't stop worrying

Don't feel like yourself anymore

Can't deal with school/uni/work or are finding it difficult to concentrate

Are feeling sick or worried about your health

Have questions about, or want to cut down on alcohol or other drug use

Want to talk about sexuality, gender identity or relationships

Are having difficulties with your family or friends

Have sexual health issues or want information about contraception

Are being bullied, hurt or harassed

Are worried about work or study or if you're having money trouble

Need someone to talk to.

Getting support can help you to keep you on track at school, study or work, and in your personal and family relationships. The sooner you get help the sooner things can begin to improve for you.

# How headspace can help



## Your first appointment at headspace

Appointments at a **headspace** centre can vary in length but are usually 50 minutes to an hour.

It's okay to feel nervous about getting help for the first time. It can be helpful to bring along a family member, carer or friend to help support you.

You'll probably be asked a lot of questions on your first visit. This is to make sure that

all the important issues are covered, and to help develop the best solution for you. As you get to know and trust your **headspace** worker you will probably find that talking about what is going on gets easier.

The appointment is your time. Feel free to ask questions about anything that's on your mind so the **headspace** worker can help you find the best

solution, or find the information that you need. It also helps the **headspace** worker to understand what is worrying you.



## Cost

Services at a **headspace** centre are either free, or have a low cost. You can ask if there is a cost when you make your appointment.

Some services require you to have a referral from a doctor. But don't worry; **headspace** can help you with this as well.

All **headspace** services are free but if you call from your mobile your usual call charges apply.

## eheadspace

If you don't have a **headspace** centre nearby or you don't feel ready to visit a centre, **eheadspace** provides confidential online and telephone support 7 days a week.

To access **eheadspace** for the first time all you need to do is register at [eheadspace.org.au](http://eheadspace.org.au) or phone **1800 650 890**. You will need to provide some information like your email address, postcode and age. **eheadspace** sessions are generally for 30-60 minutes.



If you are receiving support from a **headspace** centre or another service, **headspace** may ask your permission to speak with your worker to ensure **eheadspace** is providing the best possible support.

## Confidentiality

When you talk to a **headspace** worker what you say is kept confidential. This means nothing you say can be passed on to anyone else without your permission however there are a few exceptions.

If **headspace** is seriously worried about your safety or the safety of someone else they must – by law – try to keep everyone safe.

This means they might have to share their concerns with someone else. Talk to your **headspace** worker about confidentiality to ensure you understand how it works.



If you need immediate medical attention, call 000 or call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800.



## Getting the help that's right for you

When you talk with a **headspace** worker it's important that you feel safe and comfortable – **headspace** will do its best to make sure this happens.

If you do not think your **headspace** visits are working out it is important to ask yourself why. There could be a few reasons: it might be because it is hard to talk

about what's on your mind, or it might be that you and your worker are not the right fit. Either way, don't give up. Talk to your worker about how you are feeling and together you can find a way forward.



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For more information, to find your nearest **headspace** centre or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au)



# Tips for a healthy headspace



There are a number of ways you can look after your mental health and wellbeing every day...

## Get informed

Understanding more about what you're going through is an important first step. Information to help you make good decisions about relationships, school, finances and seeking help is available in a number of ways. Read pamphlets, articles or fact sheets, listen to podcasts, talk to or watch videos about others who have had similar experiences, read trusted websites for information, or ask a trusted adult for advice.



## Sleep well

Getting a good night's sleep helps you feel energised, focused and motivated. Adolescence is a time when a number of changes to the "body clock" impact on sleeping patterns and you are more likely to have problems with sleep. Developing a sleeping routine can help you sleep much better. To do this try to wake up around the same time each day, get out of bed when you wake up, and go to bed around the same time each night. Avoiding caffeine after lunchtime, having a quiet, dark and uncluttered bedroom and shutting down your phone, laptop and other electronic devices before bed can also help you get a good night's sleep.

## Eat well

Eating well doesn't only reduce the risk of physical health problems, like heart disease and diabetes, but it can also help with your sleeping patterns, energy levels, and your general health and wellbeing. You might have noticed that your mood can affect your appetite and food intake. A good balanced diet with less of the bad things (e.g. junk food and lots of sugars) and more of the good things (e.g. vegies, fruit, whole grains and plenty of water) will make sure you have all of the vitamins and minerals to help your body and brain function well.



## Physical activity

Physical activity is important for everyone's health and wellbeing. If you're feeling down or finding things are difficult, physical activity may be the last thing you feel like doing. But even small activities like walking around the block can help relieve stress and frustration, provide a good distraction from your thoughts, help you concentrate and can help you look and feel better. Find a physical activity that you enjoy (e.g. swimming, playing sports with friends or cycling) and make a plan to do it regularly.



## Set realistic goals

Setting realistic goals can help you to work towards a healthy headspace. Small, realistic goals can be a great way to work towards feeling well – everyone has to start somewhere. Work towards eating well, getting more active, sleeping better and also think about working towards long-term life goals. Setting and achieving realistic goals can be incredibly motivating and can help build self-confidence.



## Build strategies

We all have coping strategies – some good, some not so good (e.g. using drugs and alcohol). There are various positive coping strategies you can try; exercise, relaxation techniques, talking to someone, writing or art. Experiment with what works best for you.



## Reduce harmful effects of alcohol and drug use

Some people make the mistake of thinking that taking drugs and/or alcohol can help get them through tough times. While it may help people to cope temporarily, drugs and alcohol are one of the leading causes of harm to Australian young people and can contribute to, or trigger, mental health problems over time. Being responsible and reducing your use can improve your health and wellbeing.



# Tips for a healthy headspace



## Change your self-talk

Self-talk is the way that you talk to yourself, that voice inside your head. It can be positive (e.g. "I can make it through this exam") or negative (e.g. "I'm never going to be able to pass this subject"). There are a number of things you can do to change the direction of your self-talk. First, listen to your inner voice – is your self-talk helping you or reinforcing bad feelings? Next, try to replace your negative thoughts with more realistic ones. Try to look for a more rational spin on your situation or think of strategies to tackle your problems, rather than giving up hope. By working on your self-talk the more you'll feel confident and in control of yourself.



## Develop assertiveness skills

Being assertive means standing up for your own rights; valuing yourself and valuing others' opinions without letting them dominate you. This can help build your self-esteem and self-respect. Being assertive is not the same as being aggressive. Remember to always listen, be prepared to compromise and be respectful of the other person's opinion, while still being confident, calm and knowing what you want.

## Relax

There are many ways to relax and different relaxation techniques to use to overcome stress. Progressive muscle relaxation involves tensing and relaxing specific groups of muscles from your feet all the way to your head, while focussing on your feelings of tension and relaxation. You could also try breathing techniques, such as deep breathing or focussed breathing (breathing in through the nose and as you breathe out say a positive statement to yourself like 'relax' or 'calm down'). Place a hand over your diaphragm to make sure you're breathing slowly – you should feel your hand move if you're doing it right. Focus on breathing in slowly for 4 seconds, holding your breath for 2 seconds and breathing out slowly for 6 seconds.



## Practice conflict resolution

Having a hard time with friends or family is difficult for most people. Talking through the issues in a calm and thoughtful way is the best approach. Avoid getting personal, be willing to compromise and listen to their perspective.



## Help and be kind to others

Do something to help someone else. Acts of kindness help other people but also make you feel good. Give a compliment, offer to help someone out or volunteer either on a once-off project or an ongoing basis and allow yourself to feel good for making someone else feel good.

## Be socially active and get involved

Social relationships are really important to your general wellbeing. It is okay to take time out for yourself but friends can provide support when you're having a tough time. Spending time with friends is also really important for keeping and building on existing friendships. Getting involved with volunteer work, hobbies, clubs or committees, or sports can help you feel connected to your wider community while also meeting new people. If you're not feeling up to going out, even a phone call, email, text message or Facebook message can help us feel connected to friends and family.

## Play



Play is important for staying mentally healthy. Devoting time to just having fun can recharge your battery, revitalise your social networks, and reduce stress and anxiety.

## Seek help

A problem can sometimes be too hard to solve alone, even with support from friends and family. Be honest with yourself about when you may need support and get professional help. You can see your general practitioner (GP), make an appointment to chat to someone at your local **headspace** centre or visit **eheadspace.org.au**. Finding help might feel scary at the start but it gets easier over time. Getting support can help you to keep on track with school, study or work, and in your personal and family relationships. The sooner you get help the sooner things can begin to improve for you.



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# Getting help from a general practitioner (GP)



## What is a general practitioner?

General practitioners (GPs) are doctors who are trained to help you with any type of physical or mental health issue. They keep your health issues private and their services are either free or at a low cost. This means that seeing a GP is a great place to start when you are concerned about any health issues including contraception, sexual health, drug or alcohol use, relationship problems, or feeling down or upset.

GPs are widely available around Australia.

## Finding a GP



**Your family GP is often a good place to start if you need some help and feel comfortable talking to them.**

Even if they know your family they are still required to keep information about you private. (There is more information about confidentiality over the page).

Another way of finding a GP is to ask your friends, family or someone at school or work who they would recommend. There might also be a medical centre in your area where you can simply drop in and ask about their services. Schools, TAFEs and universities often know about local GPs and sometimes have their own medical services. A quick search online will also help you find a GP nearby.

Most **headspace** centres have a GP and can also link you in with other health workers at the **headspace** centre if you need it.

## Costs and Medicare

When you make your appointment ask the receptionist about the costs of your visit. Many GPs 'bulk bill' the full cost of the consultation to Medicare, so you won't have to pay anything. This is usually the case with a **headspace** GP.

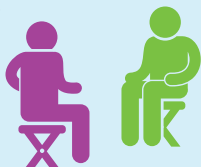
You will need to show a Medicare card or give your Medicare number to be bulk billed. With some GPs you may need to pay a small fee but with a Medicare card you will be able to get most of the money back later.

You can use a parent's or family's card but if you are Australian and over 15 years of age you are entitled to have your own Medicare card. Having your own card means that your parents are unable to review your visits to the doctor. You can apply for your own card by filling out a form available at a Medicare office, or through the Medicare website ([www.medicareaustralia.gov.au](http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au)). Your GP and some pharmacists might have forms as well.

## Making an appointment

**You'll usually need to make an appointment to see a GP, either by phoning or dropping into their medical practice.**

The receptionist doesn't need to know the reason why you want to see the GP but on your first visit you will have to provide your personal contact details. If you don't feel comfortable going on your own consider taking someone else to the appointment; a friend, parent or relative.



Some GPs may not have appointments for new patients for a week or two, or sometimes even longer. Let them know if it's an urgent problem. **If you need immediate medical attention call 000** or go to a hospital Emergency Department.

Appointments are usually for 10-15 minutes. For your first appointment, or if you have a number of issues you want to talk about, ask for a longer appointment so you have plenty of time to cover everything.

First appointments with GPs at **headspace** centres are usually



longer so that they can get to know you. If your concerns are about a physical health, sexual health or contraception issues you will probably get an appointment quite soon. If you are asking for help with mental health issues, including feeling worried, upset or down, you may be seen by another health worker before seeing a GP.



# Getting help from a general practitioner (GP)



## What to expect when you visit a GP

At your first visit the GP will usually ask a range of questions about your general health and lifestyle, your family background, how you are thinking and feeling, and how you are getting on at school/work/study and with your family and friends.



GPs need to know about you as a 'whole person' so that they can understand the problem and give you the right advice. They are not prying into your life for no reason, and they are not making judgments about you.

The GP might want to give you a physical check-up, for example by taking your blood pressure, heart rate and temperature, or examining other parts of your body relevant to your problem. A GP cannot perform any type of physical examination without your permission.

The GP will then discuss the problem and what to do next. Ask questions so you understand what is going on and what you can do to feel better.

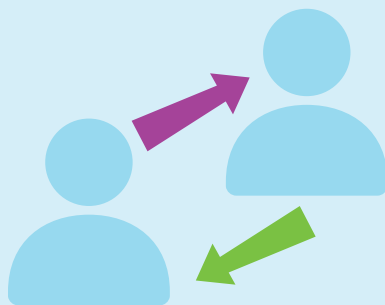
Sometimes the GP will ask you to come back for a return visit to check on your progress, discuss the results of any tests, or just to have some more time to explore the problem. To make sure everything is going okay for you or to monitor other health problems, the GP may also want to see you regularly.

The GP may talk with you about seeing someone like a psychologist or counsellor to support you with your mental health. They will explain how this might help, what services are available and how to get started. They can also fill out a mental health care plan to help you access these services for free.



## Changing GPs

If you are not feeling comfortable and safe with your GP you can change to another GP and ask that your medical records get transferred.



## Confidentiality

All GPs have to keep information about their patients private. This means they cannot discuss your visit with anyone else but there are some exceptions.

If a GP thinks you are likely to harm yourself or someone else they have a 'duty of care' to make sure you stay safe so they may need to tell other people. There are also some circumstances by law that require GPs to share information.



If you want to know more about your rights to privacy and confidentiality ask your GP to talk it through with you at the beginning of your first appointment.

# If your friend is not okay...



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## If your friend is not okay...

Getting help for a friend can take a bit of time and effort but it is worth it. As part of being a good and supportive friend, there are times when we will need to check in with our friends, to ensure that they are okay. Good help will assist your friend to deal with their problems and help them get on with life.



ARE YOU OKAY?

## If your friend tells you that they're not okay...

**1 Listen and try not to judge or "fix things" straight away** – taking the time to listen lets them know that you care and that their feelings are important. If someone has been going through a tough time, it can be a big relief to talk about what has been going on. Listening can be helpful, even without taking any actions, it might just be what they need. And don't panic, the fact that your friend sees something is wrong is a really important first step.

**2 Let your friend know that they don't have to go through this on their own** and that you are there to help and support them.

**3 Some people need 'time' or 'space' before they're willing to accept help.**

Just giving them information about where to get help or providing them with fact sheets can be useful.

**4 Suggest they read stories at [headspace.org.au](https://www.headspace.org.au) about other young people who have made it through difficult times;** it may help reduce their feelings of being alone and give them hope for the future.

**5 Be honest about why you are worried** and ask if anyone else knows about how they are feeling.

**6 Encourage them to try some self-help strategies.** Things like eating well, exercising, writing feelings down, getting enough sleep, doing things they enjoy and avoiding alcohol and other drugs are just a few self-help tips that your friend could try. (Visit [headspace.org.au](https://www.headspace.org.au) to download the 'Tips for a healthy headspace' fact sheet).

**7 Don't be too forceful in encouraging self-help activities.** It's important to understand that your friend may not feel able to use them because of how they are feeling, or they may not be enough to help them to feel better. If they're interested, you may be able to do some of the strategies with them (e.g. going for a walk, watching their favourite movie).

**8 Encourage them to talk to a trusted adult** about what is going on and how they are feeling (e.g. a family member, teacher, sports coach).

**9 Sometimes, self-help strategies and/or talking to family and friends is not enough and that's okay.**

There are a lot of professionals out there who can help. Suggest they make an appointment with their general practitioner (GP) or their nearest **headspace** centre if things don't begin to improve. You could offer to go with them if they need some extra support.

**10 Let them know about eheadspace** if your friend would prefer to seek help online rather than face-to-face. **eheadspace.org.au** provides free online and telephone support (1800 650 890) for young people. Lifeline (13 11 14) and Kids Helpline (1800 55 1800) also provide free and confidential support over the phone.



# If your friend is not okay...



## If your friend doesn't want to get help and you are still worried

Continue to support them in a respectful way. Try not to judge them or become frustrated.

Let their family or another trusted adult know that you are worried. You have to strike the right balance between your friend's right to privacy and the need to make sure they are safe. If you decide to tell someone else, try to let your friend know first that you are planning on doing this.

## What not to do or say

Don't tell them to cheer up or get over it – this is not helpful.

Don't encourage them to have a night out involving drugs or alcohol. Substance use may help them cope with their concerns temporarily, but is likely to make things worse.

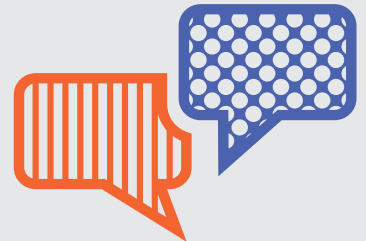
Don't make promises you can't keep – if your friend is at risk of harming themselves or somebody else, you need to seek immediate help, even if they ask you not to.



If you are worried that your friend needs urgent medical help or might hurt themselves or somebody else, you need to tell somebody immediately, even if they have asked you not to. This could be a parent, teacher, their GP, someone from a local health service or by calling 000.

## Some things you can say or ask to encourage someone to seek further help

- **Have you talked to anyone else about this?** It's great that you have talked to me, but it might be good to get advice and help from a health worker.
- **Getting help doesn't always mean sitting on a couch with a psychologist or taking medication.** Did you know that GPs can help with this sort of stuff? Find one that bulk bills then all you need is your Medicare card (i.e. you don't have to pay)
- **There are some great websites you can check out to get more information:** [headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au); [reachout.com.au](http://reachout.com.au); [youthbeyondblue.com](http://youthbeyondblue.com)
- **Did you know that you can get free and confidential support online or over the phone?** You can log on to [ehheadspace.org.au](http://ehheadspace.org.au) to get online and telephone support from a mental health professional. You can also call Kids Helpline or Lifeline to speak to someone. All of these services are anonymous.
- **I know you're not feeling great now, but with the right help and support, you can get through this.**



Supporting a friend through a tough time can be difficult. Remember to look after yourself and your needs. Following the 'Tips for a healthy **headspace**' fact sheet may be a good way to look after your own wellbeing to prevent any problems developing. If at any stage you feel overwhelmed you should consider getting some support from a trusted adult (e.g. parent, teacher or GP). You can also contact **headspace** or Kids Helpline.



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# Information for Parents and Carers



## Changes in young people

**Young people can go through many different changes as they grow up. Raising sensitive issues and resolving problems that arise along the way can be challenging for them.**

It can often be hard as a parent to know the difference between normal behaviour, such as

occasional moodiness and irritability, and an emerging mental health problem.

If a young person develops a mental health problem it is important that they get support from both their family and friends and health professionals.



★  
The information in this fact sheet is designed to help you better understand mental health and what you can do to support young people who might be going through a tough time.  
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## Mental health and mental health problems in young people

**Good mental health is about being able to work and study to your full potential, cope with day-to-day life stresses, be involved in your community and live life in a free and satisfying way.**

A young person who has good mental health has good emotional and social wellbeing and the capacity to cope with change and challenges.

Feeling down, tense, angry, anxious or moody are all normal emotions for young people, but when these feelings persist for long periods of time, or if they begin to interfere with their daily life, they may be part of a mental health problem. Mental health problems can also influence how young people think and their ability to function in their everyday activities, whether at school, at work or in relationships.

If you think you know a young person whose mental health is getting in the way of their daily life, it is important to let them know you are there to support them.



## Warning signs

Most parents can tell when something is out of the ordinary, but there are also signs that suggest a young person might be experiencing a mental health problem. These are new, noticeable and persistent changes in the young person, lasting at least a few weeks, including:

Not enjoying, or not wanting to be involved in things that they would normally enjoy	Changes in appetite or sleeping patterns	Being easily irritated or angry for no reason	Their performance at school, TAFE, university or work is not as good as it should be or as it once was
Involving themselves in risky behaviour that they would usually avoid, like taking drugs or drinking too much alcohol	Experiencing difficulties with their concentration	Seeming unusually stressed, worried, down or crying for no reason	Expressing negative, distressing, bizarre or unusual thoughts

# Information for Parents and Carers



## »» Mistakes happen ««

Learn from mistakes – whether by you or the young person – to learn and keep moving forward. Having some conflict and then repairing the relationship is more important than avoiding doing anything because you fear upsetting the young person.

## What affects a young person's mental health?

There is no one “cause” for mental health concerns. Instead, it seems that a number of overlapping factors may increase the risk of a young person developing a mental health problem. These can include:

- **Biological factors** – family history of mental health problems
- **Adverse early life experiences** – abuse, neglect, death or a significant loss or trauma
- **Individual psychological factors** – self-esteem, coping skills or thinking style
- **Current circumstances** – stress from work or school, money problems or difficult personal relationships, or problems within your family
- **Serious illness or physical injury**
- **Drugs and alcohol** – use and experimentation.

## How to help the young person you are worried about

HELP

When someone in your family has a mental health problem:

- **Keep communication open**, show empathy and don't rush into judgements
- **Be available** without being intrusive or 'pushy'
- **Spend time with the person**. Take an interest in their activities and encourage them to talk about what's happening in their life
- **Take the person's feelings seriously**
- **Encourage and support positive friendships**
- **Encourage activities that promote mental health**, such as exercise, healthy eating, regular sleep, and doing things the person enjoys
- **Give positive feedback**
- **Let the person know that you love them**. They may not always admit it, but this is likely to be very important to them.

## How to find help

If you are worried about the health and safety of a young person:

Talk openly and honestly with them, and let them know that you are concerned

Reassure them that you will be there for them, and ask what they need from you

Let them know that there is lots of help available

Help find an appropriate service, such as a **headspace** centre ([headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au)) and support them in attending

Ask direct questions if you are concerned about suicide. For example, have you been thinking about death? Have you thought about ending your life?

Help them build a support network

Look after yourself as well. Get some support by talking to someone you trust, and seek professional help for yourself if you need it.

## Some important things to remember about young people

- **Young people need a sense of belonging**, connectedness to their family, friends and community, and to make a meaningful contribution
- **Firm and consistent boundaries** are essential, but try to involve the young person in negotiating acceptable 'rules'
- **A balance between self-responsibility and support** helps a 'child' grow to an 'adult'
- **Young people need to do things differently** from their parents and become individuals in their own right
- **Teenagers and young adults often question everything** their families say and do
- **Try to stay confident in yourself**, but also be open to learning



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# Sleep



**Sleep is a really important part of our life.** It helps us to feel well, focused and happy. Most people experience a bad night's sleep now and again, but if you regularly don't get enough sleep it can really affect how you feel and what you can get done during the day.



## How much sleep do I need?

Everyone is different, and the amount of sleep you need might be different to what your friends need. In general though:

**People aged 14-17 need between**



**People aged 18-25 need between**



## Why is sleep important for good mental health?

Good sleep habits have been shown to improve mood, concentration and performance at school or work. They may also help control overeating and help prevent obesity.

Lack of sleep is linked to symptoms of depression such as feeling down, hopeless, irritable, having thoughts of suicide, and using alcohol or other drugs.

Research suggests that for every hour of sleep you miss at night, there is a:



increase in risk of unpleasant emotions or feelings that affect day to day function



increase in the chance of feeling sad and hopeless



increase in the chance of having thoughts of suicide



increase in the chance of suicidal behaviour



increase in the chance of using tobacco, alcohol or marijuana.

People who regularly go to sleep very late each night and don't wake up until the afternoon may have Delayed Sleep Phase Syndrome, and are at an increased risk of developing insomnia and depression.

Very short sleepers (less than five hours each night) are more likely to experience long-term mental health issues than people who get enough sleep.

On the other hand, if you sleep more than the recommended amount each night, find it hard to wake up in the morning or still feel tired during the day, something else might be going on.

If you're worried about any aspect of your sleep, or are experiencing any of the negative consequences of bad sleep, get in touch with your GP.

## What gets in the way of a good night's sleep?

For young people, not getting enough sleep might be caused by:

**Biological factors:** such as puberty or changes in your body clock

**Environmental factors:** such as social pressure, school or university workload, use of electronic devices, or using alcohol or other drugs



# Sleep



## Some tips for a good night's sleep

If you're having trouble falling asleep or staying asleep, here are a few things you can try:

- **Aim to get to bed and wake up around the same time each day**, including on the weekend. This helps your body to get into a routine. Try not to take naps in the day as this affects your body's routine.
- **Turn off your screens (such as your phone, TV and laptop) at least 30 minutes before bed time.** The light from screens can stop your brain producing the sleep chemical melatonin, which is important in helping you get to sleep.
- **Try not to worry about having a bad sleep.** A lot of people underestimate how much sleep they get – so you might find it useful to use a sleep app to see how much sleep you're getting.

However, if you find that this makes you focus on how much sleep you're not getting, you may be better off without it.

- **Natural sleep cycles are based on your body clock, which is mainly set by when you're exposed to light.** Light is needed in the morning, so aim to be outside for 30 minutes, sit by a bright window, or use a specially designed artificial light sources. In the evening, your body needs less stimulation, so try dimming the lights.
- **Exercising during the day is a good way to make you tired at night.** This might mean going to the gym, walking around the block at lunchtime or playing sport. Try to avoid exercising last thing at night though, as this can keep you awake.

• **It's best to try and keep your bed for sleep and sex.** Working, watching TV or being online in bed can cause your brain to associate bed with being alert and awake.

• **Your bedroom should be dark, cool (around 16-18°C) and quiet.**

• **Try to limit how much caffeine you have, including coffee, energy drinks and soft drinks.** Also, try to avoid caffeine entirely after lunchtime.

• **Avoid drinking alcohol before bed.** It might make you sleepy, but you're less likely to get good, restful sleep with alcohol in your system.

• **Avoid smoking before bed.** Discuss ways to quit smoking as well as any other problems with drugs or alcohol with your GP.

• **Sleep medications are not usually required to help with sleep problems.** While they can help in the short term, they also have a number of side effects and may not give good quality sleep. Your body can also get used to these medications quickly so the effect wears off.



For more information about sleep, go to

[www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au](http://www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au)

[www.reachout.com](http://www.reachout.com)



## Getting help

If you find it hard to fall or stay asleep, or you feel tired a lot of the time, a healthcare professional may be able to help. In a first instance try contacting **headspace** or get in touch with your GP.



**headspace**

National Youth Mental Health Foundation

For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au)

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