Sleep and Mental Health

Good mental health is more than just the absence of mental illness.

We spend approximately a third of our lives asleep. Sleep is an essential and involuntary process, without which we cannot function to our full potential. It is as important to our bodies as eating, drinking and breathing, and is vital for maintaining good mental and physical health. Sleeping helps to repair and restore our brains, not just our bodies.

Signs you may need more sleep

- “Zoning out” or dozing off during the day
- Excessive blinking or yawning
- Tripping or stumbling more than usual
- Feeling lazy and unmotivated
- Poor memory and concentration
- Slow or slurred speech

Signs of a sleep disorder

If you experience persistent sleep difficulties, you may have a sleep disorder. Examples include:

- Inability to fall or stay asleep
- Being too sleepy during the day
- Pauses in your breathing during sleep
- There are ways to get help. Talk to your doctor.

Create a healthy sleep routine...

1. Wake up at about the same time every day, even weekends

It’s a myth that you can make-up for lost sleep, and erratic wake times mess with your internal rhythm. If you wake up at noon on the weekend, it might be hard to fall asleep before 4am on Sunday night, which can perpetuate a late sleep cycle.

2. Rethink your drink and dinner time meal

Caffeine & alcohol can disrupt your sleep. Caffeine stays in your system for up to 8 hours and can keep you awake. Alcohol, though it may make you feel drowsy, decreases sleep duration and quality. Eating too large a meal before bed can affect your sleep quality.

3. Turn off screens

30-60 minutes before bed: Staring at your TV, computer, or tablet screen can disrupt your natural sleep-wake cycle and make it harder to fall asleep. If you can’t turn off the tech, dim your screen, put your phone on silent, or use the “Do not disturb” option on your phone.

4. Napping (For when we have those inevitable late nights that just can’t be avoided)

Nap! A nap lasting 15-45 minutes can give you energy, make you more alert and improve mental performance. But, naps longer than 45 minutes (after you enter deep sleep) may actually leave you feeling more tired! Avoid late afternoon and evening naps, which can disrupt night sleep.

5. Exercise

Regular exercise can create more restful sleep, but avoid exercise within two hours of bedtime because it may be too energizing.

6. Environment

Do your best to create a positive sleep environment. Think cool, dark and quiet! Use thick curtains or an eye mask to block out light and ear plugs to reduce noise. If you can wake to natural light it will make it easier.