



Donabate CC Guidance Newsletter

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# Sleep



## **We all need our sleep.**

Regular, long stretches of undisturbed quality sleep is essential for our mental as well as physical health. Closed schools has changed our daily routines but our healthy sleep routine may have been disturbed as well.

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## **Too little sleep affects your mind and body**

Sleep disruption and sleep deprivation can really impact our mental health and wellbeing. Here are some of the ways we may feel it:

## Changes in mood

We might find ourselves more irritable and cranky. When we're not getting enough sleep we can get angry, frustrated or upset more easily. We can feel less control over our reactions to things and people. With poor sleep we're more vulnerable to low moods; feeling sad and lacking enthusiasm.



## Fatigue

Problems with sleep can leave us fighting feelings of tiredness during the day, and drifting off in class and lectures. It's also not unusual to experience headaches from lack of sleep.

## Concentration difficulties

Attention, concentration, memory and reaction times are all affected by poor sleep. You might forget things and make bad decisions, and take risks that you wouldn't if you were fully rested.

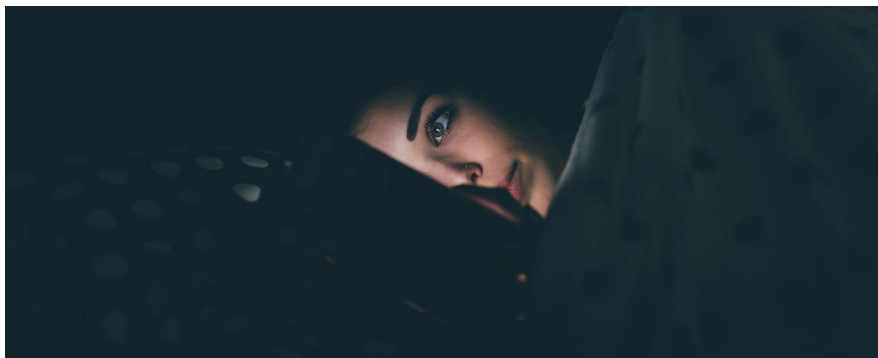
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 Sleep is the single most effective thing we can do to reset our brain and body health each day 

- Matthew Walker, neuroscientist and author of 'Why We Sleep'

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If you're not sure why you're not sleeping well, keep a sleep diary. Record times you go to bed and get up, what and when you ate, caffeine consumption, whether you exercised during the day, and what you did before bed. This can give you a better picture of what's going on and what changes



you can make.

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### **Tips for getting more sleep**

There are several things you can try to improve your sleep.

#### **Watch your diet**

Eat regular, healthy meals. Milk, bananas and turkey contain an amino acid (tryptophan) which is sleep prompting.

Reduce the amount of sugar you consume. The more sugar you eat during the day, the more likely you are to wake up in the middle of the night. Sugary drinks might give you an energy rush but that will be followed by an energy crash, leaving you feeling exhausted.

Don't eat too late. Feeling hungry or being too full before going to bed can interfere with sleep.

## **Develop a routine for the week**

Go to bed and get up at the same time every day. This helps regulate our body clock and makes sleep more natural. This is particularly important while schools are closed. Try to be at your desk at 8.30 and finish your school work by 3.10.

Lie-ins can seem great but try to keep wake-up times on weekdays and weekends to within two hours of each other, so you don't throw out your sleep cycle.

If you find it difficult to go to bed at a regular time, set an alarm as a reminder.

Naps can make it more difficult to sleep at night, but for some they help recharge you quickly. They don't suit everyone though. Keep them under 45 minutes.

## **Create a sleepy environment**

Make your bedroom a place you associate with rest, and deal with anything in the environment that might keep you awake. If there's noise, get cheap ear plugs from a pharmacy. If it's too bright, try an eye mask.

Keep your bed only for sleeping. Don't study, play computer games, watch TV or eat in bed.

## **Limit devices at night**

Technology is keeping us all awake. Games, TVs, laptops, iPads and mobile phones stimulate the brain through the activity itself and the bright light they emit.

Switching off can be difficult and takes willpower. But late-night calls and messages are guaranteed to disrupt your sleeping patterns.

Set a boundary for yourself and with your friends, like no Whatsapping after a certain time. If you don't trust yourself to switch off, put your phone on flight mode before bed.

## **Avoid stimulants**

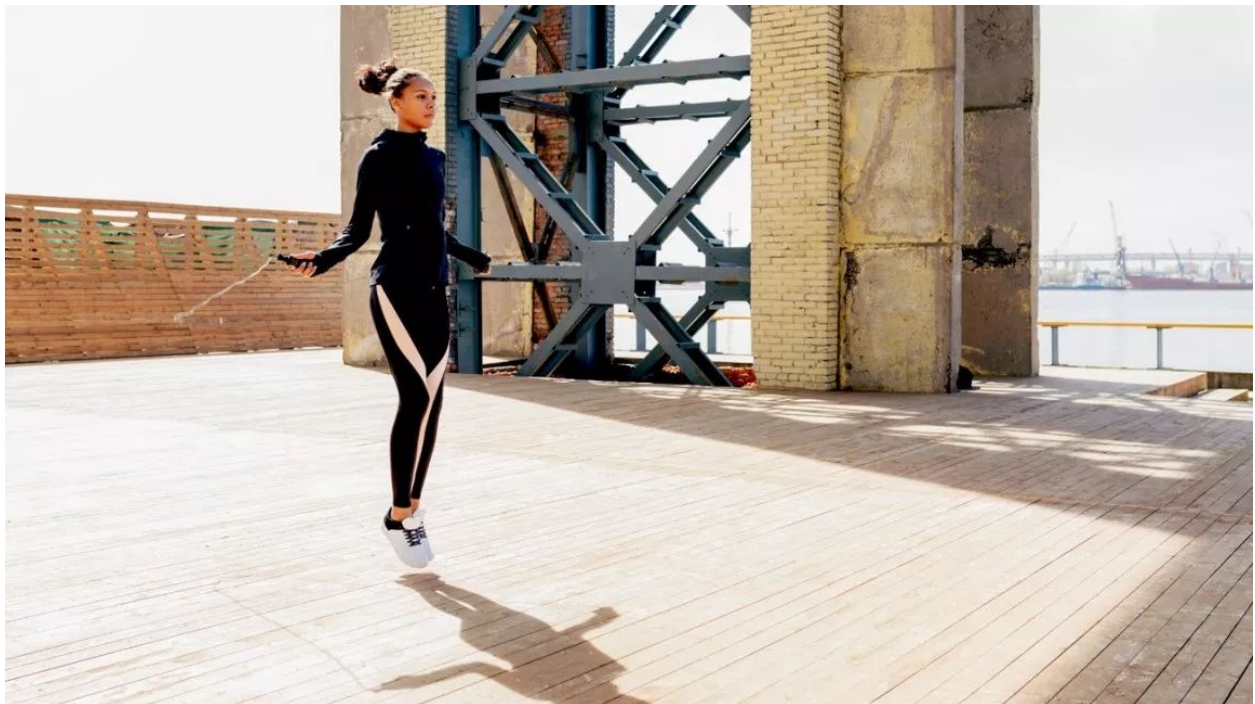
Caffeine will keep you awake. Avoid coffee and tea from the late afternoon onwards, and look out for caffeine in other sources like chocolate, energy drinks.

Nicotine is also a stimulant.

## **Exercise**

Regular exercise is good for our overall mental and physical health. Getting active during the day is especially good for sleep. You want to go to bed physically tired.

Activity late at night, however, can act as a stimulant and make it harder to get to sleep.



## Wind down



Develop your own personal wind down routine before bed. Make this a habit and it will send signals to your body to start to switch off once you begin.

Your routine could include relaxation strategies such as progressive muscular relaxation, deep breathing, visualisation and certain mindfulness exercises.

If worry about upcoming events or reliving past events is causing sleep problems for you, try writing in a journal or scheduling time to talk to someone you trust about what's bothering you.

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**The following websites have up to date and relevant mental health support should you need it:**

[www.pietahouse.ie](http://www.pietahouse.ie)

[www.jigsaw.ie](http://www.jigsaw.ie)

[www.mentalhealthireland.ie](http://www.mentalhealthireland.ie)

**Remember to reach out to your One Good Adult if you're feeling overwhelmed.**

**If you need us, please email us. We're always here.**

Alice Chaloner

Kerrie Whelan



kwhelan@donabatecc.ie  
achaloner@donabatecc.ie