

We put some of the most frequently asked questions about
sleep to

Jill Wigmore-Welsh BSc MPH HCPC FRSPH, our Sleep Expert
and put her answers into this PDF for you.

Question: I've been hearing a lot nowadays, about people struggling with sleep. Are sleep problems common, or are people just more open to talking about it than they used to be?

Answer: Yes, sleep problems are widespread, during a single year 30% of the population will experience acute insomnia, where they simply can't get off to sleep, or wake in the night and then lie awake worrying, uncomfortable, or in pain. Whether it's emotional pain or expressed physical pain, something is interrupting their peace.

A percentage of those people will go on to develop chronic insomnia, an on-going anguish which lasts more than 6 to 8 weeks and that can, in some, develop into a lifetime lasting problem.

We know that if someone has experienced mental health problems in the past, they are more likely to have a relapse than someone who has not, everyone is coming from their own place and may need support.

However, a sleep struggle can also be that the person is sleeping too much. Some people with problems can spend days as well as nights in bed, which could signal more serious mental health trouble.

Or people can experience daytime sleepiness, periods in the day when they feel exhausted, have no energy & want to sleep.

Sometimes people are so used to having sleep troubles that they think it's normal and they can't change, but fortunately, people can change habits.

Question: So what can cause people to have sleep problems?

Answer: A simple answer, lots of things, it's multi-factorial

There is a strong relationship between sleep and inside activity, worry, depression, stress, fear, lack of love and nurturing.

Day to day events can trigger a thought pattern downward spiral of ruminating and negative thinking, around finances, friends, family, relationships, work, employment, job satisfaction.

And after accidents, trauma, and injuries it's a commonplace event for people to be woken by nightmares, PTSD, night terrors.

It could be outside situations, the environment, sleeping rough, living in a noisy or dangerous place, having others in the house getting up at different times, children waking, partner having sleep trouble, others in the house ill.

Plus, there are many medically diagnosed sleep disorders, like sleep apnoea, and health conditions, or health states, which can impact the ability to get a good 8 hours sleep every night, for example, pain, respiratory problems, pregnancy, menopause.

Right now, with the global pandemic of Coronavirus, we're hearing a lot of reports of people experiencing sleep problems, nightmares sleep disturbance etc.

We don't have any conclusive data because research is still emerging; however, this will be increasing the number of people all over the world who are currently struggling with sleep.

Society & culture changes over the past few decades there have been immense.

The opening up over 24/7 society, people using screens, monitors, mobile phones late at night, which can have an impact on winding down to sleep.

More and more people need to take on more than one job for economic reasons or must work shift work or zero-hour contracts which causes increased stress.

Long periods of time spent commuting requiring early rising and late to bed reduces sleep time, and research shows this influences productivity at work.

Question: How important is sleep, can a lack of sleep make us ill?

Answer: Sleep is incredibly important, and it's often overlooked.

How well we are sleeping is a natural barometer of health, and lack of sleep 100% causes us to get ill.

However, the reverse is also true, and when we are ill, it often impacts our sleep.

It's a complex relationship, which is the same for all our systems.

Question: What are the physical and mental risks of not having enough sleep?

Answer: Sleep has sometimes been called a barometer of wellbeing; it's established that it's a risk factor for depression mental illness.

So, the biggest mental and physical risks arise from sleep deprivation.

There is a lot of data to show how and what happens when people are sleep deprived. Even ridiculously small amounts of sleep deprivation have a marked impact on your ability to function and thrive and perform at a high level.

Insufficient sleep triggers all the body systems to go off track, out of tune, off their natural balance and flow. That has serious effects on all our cells physiological responses and our emotional state.

We need sleep to enable our unconscious mind to re-write our memories and rewire neural pathways in our brain. So not only does ongoing lack of sleep lead to increased incidences of cardiac problems and deaths, but also increased chances of diabetes, obesity, and a decline in mental acuity.

That causes us to be sleepier and less smart in the day and accounts for increased accidents. Those can be in the workplace, while driving, doing sport, indeed any day to day activity.

Sleep problems also impact everyone around the person with sleep troubles. That spills over onto behaviour on the roads at work in the home within our neighbourhood and community.

If one person in a household is having sleep problems, then everyone they interact with is impacted.

Having a good sleep is every bit as important as your daily physical exercise, being mindful about nutrition, hydration, looking after your mental health. But, great quality & the right quantity of sleep can slip down on the priority list.

The way that I describe it to my clients is that it is all about creating a sustainable 'thriving wellness plan'. The goal is to live well, and the plan needs to be kind, mindful, realistic, and workable for everyone involved.

Sleep is one of those things that we only notice we are not doing well when it is going badly. Often people can get quite sleep-deprived and not notice until they feel quite unwell or their performance is impacted.

Most people do not notice if they feel fatigued but falling asleep at the wheel is well documented as a cause of road accidents.

Operator fatigue and inadequate responses are cited as one factor in serious incidents, such as the Three Mile Island, Chernobyl, and Challenger disasters. Highly sleepy workers are 70 per cent more likely to be involved in accidents than non-sleepy workers, and workers with chronic insomnia (difficulty getting to or staying asleep) are far more likely than well-rested individuals to report industrial accidents or injuries.

Fatigue is a factor in athletes' performance when it can impact focus on game time and post-game recovery.

If you have a specific problem and want some expert help, you can book a free 20-minute discovery call or an hour Well Wealthy & Smart call with a mini-plan [via our diary](#).

Question: Is there a recommendation on how much sleep do people generally need and does this vary with age?

Answer: Yes, those on the sleep foundation guidelines are quite specific well-accepted and supported by evidence.

- Teenagers (14-17): **8-10 hours**
- Younger adults (18-25): **7-9 hours**
 - Adults (26-64): **7-9 hours**
 - Older adults (65+): **7-8 hours**

Question: Is it important to stick to a strict sleep routine? Should you aim for one?

Answer: As with all things wellbeing, the ‘gold standard’ in an ideal world, is a great routine, good behaviours, so that’s the goal. If you establish a good routine, it’s much easier to ensure that you fit in the number of hours sleep that you require.

If you’re accustomed to living life with a routine where every night you lose out on sleep, then you can guarantee that at some point in the future you will have health problems.

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Question: What would a good sleep routine look like?

Answer: A good routine needs to be realistic and take account of your family and life situation.

It is likely that your routine will be different weekdays and weekends and if you are travelling for work, staying away, having children staying some days and not others. If you are working regular hours and days, you can set a regular bedtime. But if you or your partner do shift work, or you have young children who wake at night, you need another approach.

You need a basic 8 -9 hours sleep a night, every night.

I recommend an hour of wind-down *prep time* before sleep.

Question: Is there anything you can do to your bedroom to make it more conducive to sleep?

Answer: A bedroom should ideally be just for sleeping in and having sex, so clearing the clutter, tidying up, having calm, quiet colours and comfy bedding is a must. You also need to feel safe, and confident you won't be disturbed while you sleep. The best room temperature for sleep is between 15 and 19 degrees Celsius for adults.

Lined curtains or blackout blinds will help to create a dark space, which is essential if you work shifts and must sleep when it's daytime.

Plus, it helps to shut out disturbing noise, from neighbours, or traffic. So maybe consider earplugs if you must sleep somewhere noisy

Question: How do you know if you have insomnia, or if you are just a bad sleeper - is there a difference?

Answer: Insomnia is the most common sleep disorder about 30% of adults report some insomnia problem over a year and chronic insomnia (lasting) by about 10% Insomnia is when people struggle to fall asleep, or they wake far too early and lose sleep, and it is not in their control.

So, insomnia is pretty much involuntary or under unconscious control, and example would be, being kept awake by worrying, or other sleep disorders or health issues.

However some people have bad sleep because they have bad habits.

Question: When should you see a doctor?

Answer: As with most things, when there is something out of the ordinary, it is a change & it causes concern, as opposed to when it starts to cause a problem Always best to get a check-up with the physician/GP sign of insomnia or broken sleep, or changed sleep pattern, or daytime sleepiness, or a partner reporting snoring

As a healthcare professional & coach supporting people to have a night of better sleep, I encourage people to discuss their problems with their physician, because my job isn't to diagnose the problem but to offer holistic drug-free solutions.

However, the good news is that even where people have diagnosed health conditions, there is often something which can be done to improve sleep quality.

To help them live better WITH their constraint rather than offering a cure.

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Question: What does the Faster Sleep program entail?

Answer The program is a holistic approach which integrates practical behavioural change with mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, mindfulness processes for the mind & mindfulness movement for the body and breath.

It's rooted in a combination of science, evidence-supported techniques which align with contemporary neuroscience. And spirituality, an acceptance that you are naturally created, resourceful, whole and an original.

So, the program will help take you step by step from mental overload and distressing lack of sleep to having a good plan to feel calm mind, sleep & feel joy.

Many people progress from taking the steps on the program to going deeper and exploring more around their own deep minds desires and how to get them

The program is designed to help everyone sleep better regardless of their underlying health state, and to go deeper if desired.

[Book a £97 Well Wealthy & Smart and Mini Plan Call](#)

About

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Is a UK university, traditionally trained HCPC consultant Advanced Practice Physiotherapist, NCP accredited Senior Psychotherapist and a Hypnotherapist. In 1994 she embraced a life of personal development and started studying Buddhism. She has studied and accredited as a Holistic Business Coach, Master Trainer of 4G Feldenkrais, NLP & Mindfulness and is a Reiki Master. She has trained with several contemporary leaders in the field of spiritual and mission led business and with the Chan School of Public Health & Harvard.

She holds a Master of Public Health from Brunel with a research interest in individual's perception of self-change after completing training and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Public Health.

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