

SLEEP PROBLEMS

The amount of sleep that we need varies from person to person and this may change throughout our lives. Most people suffer from sleeping difficulties at some time, particularly when going through a difficult period or when stressed or ill. Lack of sleep only really becomes a problem when it recurs night after night.

If you frequently experience any of the following it may be that you have a sleep problem:-

- Delay in getting to sleep
- Waking frequently during the night
- Lying awake all night
- Waking early
- Waking up feeling tired and unrested
- Feeling irritable and sleepy during the day - as a result of lack of sleep

Some people take sleeping tablets or tranquillisers to help them through this difficult period. It is known that these drugs can make you feel tired and irritable the next day, they can also lead to addiction. Consequently, these tablets are only recommended for short term use.

If you do have a sleep problem there are a few simple tips to follow to get a good nights rest.

- Try to go to bed and get up at the same time every day.
- Make sure that you are comfortable and that your room is the right temperature.
- Take regular gentle exercise, eg. swimming or walking.
- Don't cat nap during the day or evening.
- Develop a pre-bedtime routine, eg. reading or listening to soft music.
- Avoid coffee, tea and alcohol for a couple of hours before going to bed. Try a warm milky drink or herbal tea instead.

◦ Don't eat large meals before going to bed. Allow time for your food to digest. Eat a light snack or a few biscuits if you feel hungry.

◦ If you are not asleep after ten minutes, get up and leave the room. Do something quiet, and return to bed when you feel sleepy again.

◦ Speak to a counsellor, a friend or your doctor to help you resolve any problems or worries which you may have.

◦ Learn and practice relaxation techniques.

This routine will seem hard and you will have a few bad nights and sleepy days but they will not last long.

However, occasionally sleep problems are caused by depression and in this case it is best to consult your doctor.

**Lack of sleep is not usually
a medical problem**