

## **How much sleep a night?**

On average, 7 to 8 hours sleep a night is sufficient. It is important to try and get a good nights rest. The younger you are the more sleep you need. After the age of 50 people tend to sleep for about 6 hours or less a night. Older people also tend to spend more time in light sleeping. A growth hormone is being released while we are sleeping. When we need extra hormones or we are short of sleep we take deeper sleep.

## **Is a lack of sleep harmful?**

Having difficulty sleeping once in a while won't harm you. Especially before an important event like a job interview or during a stressful time. It becomes a problem when it is starting to affect your everyday life. A lack of sleep will cause you to suffer fatigue during the day. It can also affect your emotional well-being and intelligence needed for a specific task. On the long run it can cause the development of serious mental health problems.

## **What triggers insomnia?**

There can be various reasons that cause your insomnia. Some aspects can be physical e.g. Temperature (too hot or too cold), shift-work that influences your 'body-clock', noise levels in your surrounding or lack of exercise. Other reasons can be on an emotional level.

Alcohol and tobacco can also have an affect on your sleep patterns. One cigarette can make you sleepy; however, more can lead to sleeplessness. On average a smoker has 30 minutes less sleep during a night than a non-smoker. Alcohol can cause you to fall asleep quickly, but stop you from having a proper nights rest as it is also a temporary stimulant.

## **Other Sleeping Problems:**

- Nightmares
- Sleep walking and night terrors.
- Sleep paralysis
- Hallucinations
- Narcolepsy
- Sleep apnoea

## **How can I improve my sleep?**

A healthy pattern or routine can improve your sleep. Go to bed when you feel tired enough. If you can't fall asleep, go do a relaxing activity in another room, like listening to soothing music. Repeat this pattern if you are awake for long periods. Set your alarm for the same time each morning so that a routine can be established. Check your sleeping aids. Is there anything in your bedroom that is causing a lack of sleep e.g. cushions or temperature. Try following a healthy lifestyle pattern to reduce unwanted stimulants in your body like coffee late at night. If your insomnia continues, please consult your GP to eliminate all physical aspects. Your GP can prescribe some sleeping tablets or refer you to your Community Mental Health team for an assessment if sleep-problems continue.