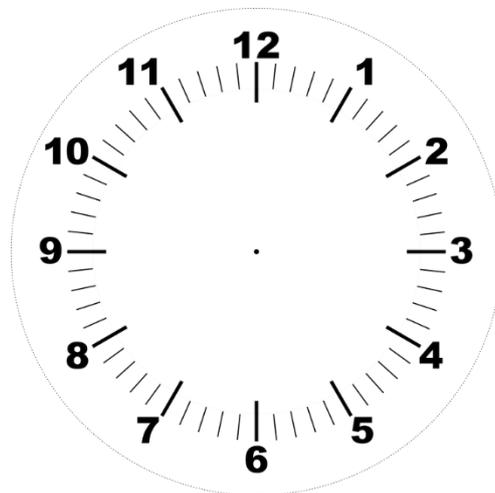


# Better sleep

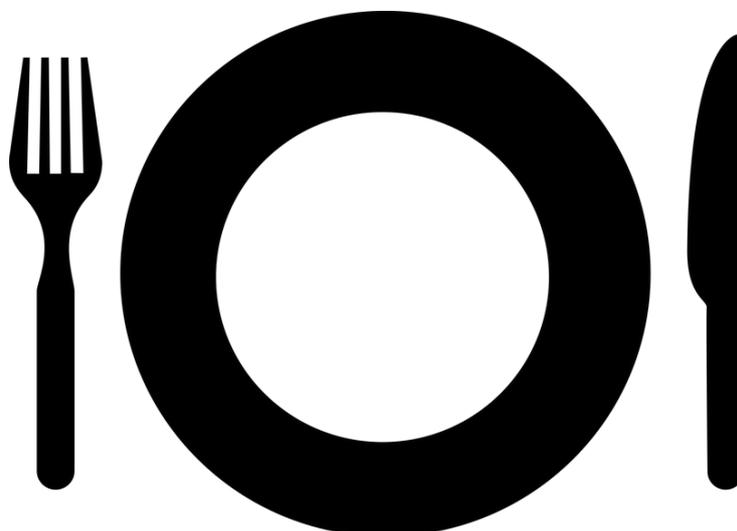
A good night's sleep is essential for our health and wellbeing. According to Mental Health Foundation, sleeping badly over multiple nights can lead to tiredness, poor concentration, irritability and memory lapses. A lack of sleep or poor quality sleep can negatively affect our daily functioning, mood and relationships with others. Poor sleep can also increase the likelihood of developing mental health problems such as depression and anxiety.

There are many different methods that can help improve our sleep patterns and the quality of sleep we get. Today we will focus on 4 simple steps you can take to improve your sleep.

- 1. Set a regular bed time.** Going to sleep at the same time each night will help your body get ready to go to sleep, which should make falling asleep easier. Most people need between 6 and 9 hours sleep a night. What time do you need to get up each morning? Work backwards from there to set your bed time and write it in the clock.



- 2. Have your last meal of the day at least two hours before you go to bed.** Eating close to bed time can reduce the quality of sleep you get, as your body will be digesting what you have eaten rather than preparing to sleep. You've already set your regular bed time so work backwards from there to figure out when you should eat your last meal of the day and write it in the plate.



**3. Be more mindful of what you drink.** Caffeine and alcohol can both disrupt your sleep pattern but in different ways. Caffeine – found in coffee, tea, cola and energy drinks – is a stimulant. If you drink a caffeinated beverage in the evening, you may find it difficult to get to sleep or stay asleep, as your brain will still be stimulated. If you are sensitive to caffeine, consuming these drinks in the afternoon may have an effect on your sleep. Alcohol on the other hand, may help you feel drowsy and fall asleep but it reduces the quality of sleep you get. You get less deep sleep after drinking alcohol, which means you wake up feeling tired. What changes can you make to what you drink in the evening and before bed?

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**4. Wind down before bed.** Relaxing before bed time can help your body prepare for sleep. The previous steps have covered how to physically prepare your body for sleep, but it's important to be relaxed mentally as well. To do this, you could read a book, write a 'to do' list before bed, practice mindfulness or get your outfit ready for the next day. All these things can help you distract from or let go of anything playing on your mind before going to sleep. How will you wind down before bed? Fill in the space with what you could do.

