

Sleeping habits - quiz

We all need sleep, but do you know how to sleep well, manage insomnia or why sleep is important? Test your knowledge with our quick health quiz and get tips for a good night's rest.

1. Do you have trouble falling asleep, or do you wake in the night and find it hard to go back to sleep?

- A. Yes, I hardly ever have a good night's sleep.
- B. No, I sleep really well most of the time.
- C. Sometimes I have bouts of troubled sleep, particularly if I'm stressed or unhappy.

2. Do you have a regular bedtime, and get up at the same time every day?

- A. Yes, give or take 30 minutes, but I do have the odd late night.
- B. Mostly, although social events mean that I might stay up half the night reasonably often, and make up for it by sleeping till noon.
- C. Not really, because my lifestyle won't allow it – for example, I'm a new parent, or I work nightshift or rotating shifts, or I frequently travel interstate or overseas.

3. Do you ever take an afternoon nap?

- A. I like to have the occasional nap if I'm tired from a late night, or if I'm recovering from an illness.
- B. Often – I'm so tired, I tend to grab a little shut-eye whenever I can.
- C. Very rarely.

4. What's your sleeping environment like?

- A. Pretty poor – for example, I work nightshift, so my bedroom is always too bright, too hot and too noisy.
- B. Peaceful – my bedroom is dark, warm and quiet.
- C. It depends – for example, I have noisy neighbours, or I can't control the room temperature and sometimes it's too stuffy or too cold.

5. Do you smoke cigarettes or drink coffee before bed?

- A. Yes, I drink coffee and smoke cigarettes late into the evening on most nights.
- B. Yes, I either drink coffee or smoke cigarettes late into the evening on most nights.
- C. No, I don't smoke cigarettes or drink coffee at all, or else I don't smoke cigarettes or drink coffee after dinner-time.

6. Do you ever drink alcohol to help you sleep?

- A. No – I don't consider alcohol to be a 'sleeping aid'.
- B. I have once or twice because I was desperate to get to sleep and I couldn't relax.
- C. Yes, I make it a habit to have a few drinks before bed, because I find it relaxes me.

See over...



7. Do you ever take sleeping tablets?

- A. Yes, I use sleeping tablets reasonably often.
- B. I've taken them a few times.
- C. No, never.

8. What do you think about when you get into bed at night?

- A. Nothing at all – I just blank my mind and drift off to sleep.
- B. Trivial things, like what I was just watching on television.
- C. I tend to problem-solve or worry when I get into bed.

See over...

Sleeping habits – quiz answers

Correct answers

1. A= 1 point, B= 3 points and C= 2 points.

The best answer is B.

Insomnia means difficulties in falling asleep or staying asleep. Over one third of people experience insomnia from time to time, but only five per cent need treatment for the condition. Insomnia is often caused by bad habits reinforced over years or even decades.

2. A= 3 points, B= 2 points and C= 1 point.

The best answer is A.

The body's alternating sleep-wake cycle is controlled by an internal 'clock' within the brain. Getting a good sleep means working with your body clock, not against it. Getting up at roughly the same time each morning, and going to bed at around the same time each night helps to 'set' your body clock to respond to this routine.

3. A= 2 points, B= 1 point and C= 3 points.

The best answer is C.

An afternoon nap can take the edge off your need for sleep at night. Except for times of severe sleep deprivation or illness, it's best to avoid afternoon naps.

4. A= 1 point, B= 3 points and C= 2 points.

The best answer is B.

Good sleep is more likely if your bedroom feels restful and comfortable. Suggestions include wearing earplugs if noisy neighbours or barking dogs are a problem, investing in a suitable mattress and using block-out curtains on windows.

5. A= 1 point, B= 2 points and C= 3 points.

The best answer is C.

Many smokers claim that cigarettes help them to relax, yet nicotine is a stimulant. So is caffeine. The side effects of these drugs, which include accelerated heart rate and increased blood pressure, are likely to keep you awake for longer. Whenever possible, avoid cigarettes and coffee (and other caffeinated drinks) in the evenings.

See over...

6. A= 3 points, B= 2 points and C= 1 point.

The best answer is A.

Alcohol is a depressant drug, which means it slows the workings of the nervous system and may help you doze off. However, this effect of alcohol wears off and your sleep will be disrupted and fragmented – so you won't feel refreshed in the morning.

7. A= 1 point, B= 2 points and C= 3 points.

The best answer is C.

Drawbacks of sleeping pills include daytime sleepiness, failure to address the causes of sleeping problems, and the 'rebound' effect – after a stint of using sleeping pills, falling asleep without them can be even harder. These drugs should only be used as a temporary last resort and under medical advice.

7. A= 3 points, B= 2 points and C= 1 point.

The best answer is A.

Insomnia is often caused by worrying. If you find it hard to clear your mind when you're in bed, try occupying yourself with relaxation exercises. You could consciously relax every part of your body, starting with your toes and working up to your scalp. Or you can concentrate on the rhythmic rise and fall of your breathing, or focus on a mantra (repeating a word or phrase).

Your score

8-12: You seem to be your own worst enemy when it comes to getting a good night's sleep. It's possible to dramatically improve the quality of your sleep if you commit yourself to making the necessary changes. See your doctor for professional advice, particularly if you take sleeping tablets.

13-18: Some of your habits are sabotaging your attempts at getting a good sleep. Now that you've pinpointed the trouble spots, you can make the necessary changes today so that you can reap the benefits tonight.

19-24: Well done, it seems that you practice good sleep hygiene habits.

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