

# Healthy sleep habits

*The Health Column*

4 March  
2015

Sleep glorious sleep! Most of us want more of it. Sleep determines how well we function during the day, as well as our emotional, developmental and physiological wellbeing. The body and brain will not function if deprived of sleep, or if sleep is lacking in quality. Sleep is as essential as food, water and oxygen.

According to the National Sleep Foundation ([www.sleepfoundation.org](http://www.sleepfoundation.org)) the amount of sleep you need varies across ages, and is impacted by lifestyle and health. The diagram outlines the current recommendations. The best habit for healthy sleep is to make sure you get enough of it. Follow the guidelines and experiment to work out the exact amount of sleep that suits you.

A 2013 study of Australian sleep habits found that up to 35% of us experience sleep difficulties including lack of sleep, fatigue, and problems initiating or maintaining sleep.

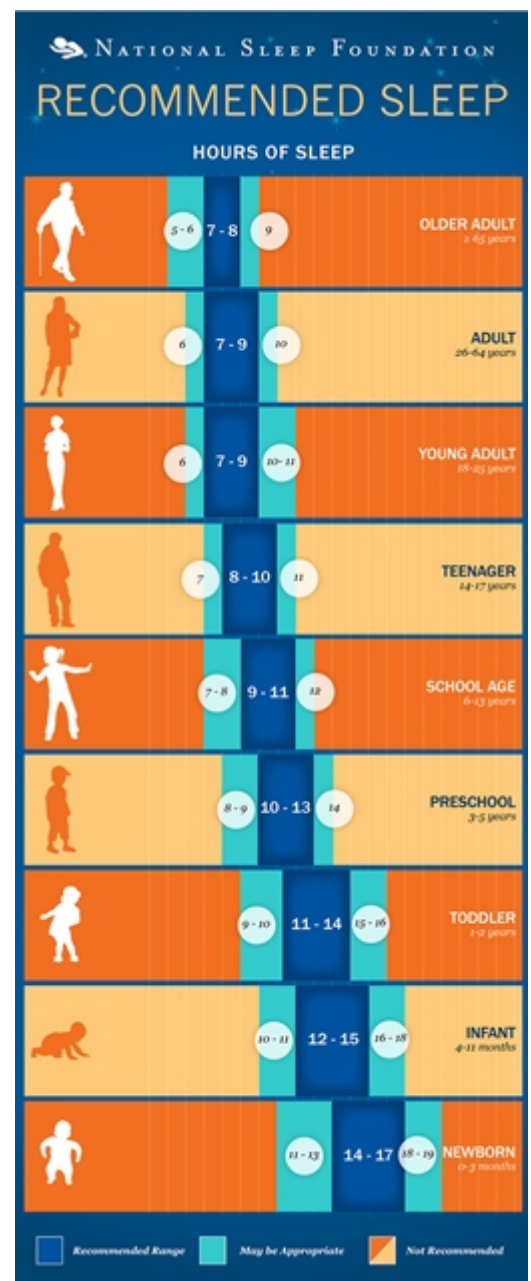
Many factors can reduce the quality and quantity of sleep and these include:

- sleep environment
- diet
- medicines
- medical conditions
- sleep disorders (e.g. sleep apnoea).

Females tend to be affected more prevalently by sleep difficulties, with the exception of snoring.

Sleep disorders and medical conditions account for some sleep difficulties however, most stem from environmental and lifestyle choices including:

- electronic devices, such as mobile phones and tablets in the bedroom. These can affect the body's ability to wind down before sleep
- being overweight or obese



- excessive alcohol consumption
- stress.

To improve your sleep health you can lose weight, practice relaxation techniques (e.g. meditation), engage in regular exercise, and consume less alcohol and caffeine. It's also important to make sure your environment is supportive of healthy sleep. Most people sleep best in darkened, quiet rooms with fresh air, and on comfortable and supportive mattresses and pillows. Adults and children can also benefit from a calming before-bed routine that avoids the use of electronic devices.

Signs of a sleep problem may include:

- finding it hard to go to sleep
- restless sleep
- waking up during the night or very early in the morning, and not being able to get back to sleep
- not feeling refreshed from sleep
- feeling tired, irritable, anxious or depressed
- finding it difficult to concentrate, remember things and make decisions.

Your local pharmacy is your health destination and can provide a range of products, medicines, services and advice to support healthy sleep habits. These include:

- sleeping aids, such as those to relieve snoring
- prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) medicines
- medicine advice, including how medicines affect sleep
- healthy lifestyle tips advice to improve the quality and quantity of sleep
- services to help you lose weight
- services for sleep disorders (e.g. sleep apnoea).

Pharmacists and pharmacy assistants can help manage sleeping problems. If you think you may have a sleep problem, visit your local pharmacy to find out what is available.

In addition, you can get more information on healthy sleeping habits from pharmacies around Australia providing the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia's Self Care health information. Self Care Fact Cards available from these pharmacies include topics such as *Sleeping problems*.

For the nearest Self Care pharmacy location phone the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia on 1300 369 772, or go to [www.psa.org.au](http://www.psa.org.au) 'Supporting practice' then 'Self Care', and then 'Find a Self Care pharmacy'.