

Recommendations for Dealing with Sleep Problems

(Altena et al., 2020)

- Try to keep a regular night-time and wake-up time schedule: always get up at more or less the same time, bring some structure to the day, in particular for children.
- Schedule brief (e.g. 15 min) times during the day to stress and reflect upon the situation: write thoughts down, talk about stress, etc. Try to restrict your thinking about these things to specific times to reduce the chance that this stress interferes with night-time sleep.
- If possible, use your bed only for sleep and sex, and for no other activity; this is best achieved by only going to bed when you normally feel sleepy.
- Use the current opportunity to follow your natural sleep rhythm closer (in particular for evening types and adolescents).
- Use this opportunity to allow your sleep period to fit more with your natural circadian preference (e.g. for an earlier or later sleep-wake timing than is typically allowed, in particular for adolescents, older adults and evening types – see explanations above).
- Use social media to share feelings of stress and anxiety with family and friends, but also to share distracting positive information, e.g. with humorous content, possibly unrelated to the virus outbreak. However, do not take devices and tablets into the bedroom; switch them off before going to bed to reduce sleep disruption due to light exposure, notifications, and the need to respond to requests and posts.
- Find helpful distractions, keep busy with those activities you are familiar with and enjoy doing.
- Limit the amount of time you are exposed to news about COVID-19. If more time is available and means allow it: make your home and in particular your bedroom a more comfortable, quiet, dark and cool environment.
- Exercise regularly, preferably in daylight.
- Try to get natural daylight during the day, particularly in the morning, and if not possible, have your home brightly lit in the daytime by opening curtains and blinds, or having lights on; try to have dim light during the evening, with it even darker at night.
- Choose familiar and relaxing activities before bedtime: e.g. reading a book, yoga, etc.
- If you are less active during the day than normal, also eat less at set times, and at the latest 2 hr before desired sleep onset, to prevent sleep disruption.

Altena, E., Baglioni, C., Espie, C.A., Ellis, J., Gavrilloff, D., Holzinger, B., Schlarb, A., Frase, L., Jernelov, S. & Riemann, D. (2020). Dealing with sleep problems during home confinement due to the COVID 19 outbreak: Practical recommendations from a task force of the European CBT-I Academy. *Journal of Sleep Research*, 29, 29(4), 1-7.

Sleep On It Canada <https://sleeponitcanada.ca/>