Who is the leaflet for? What is its aim?
This leaflet is for young people between the ages of 13 and over who are having difficulties with their sleep patterns.

Why is sleep important?
Sleep is important because it allows our brains and bodies to recover from all the activity they have to do during the day.

Try not to worry too much if you haven’t had a good night sleep for the odd night here and there. Science experiments have shown that even if a person has not had enough sleep they can still function pretty well during the day. So, they won’t be slower at reacting to things, they’ll still be able to solve problems and can still do things right.

However, if your sleep is often disturbed, it may be helpful to think about how you could help yourself sleep better. Over time, not having enough sleep can affect how much energy you have for doing the things you enjoy, like playing sport, or it can make it harder to think clearly or concentrate during class. You might also notice that your mood is lower when you are not sleeping well or you might find it more difficult to cope with stressful situations.
How much sleep should I be having?

There is no set rule on how many hours of sleep we must have, everyone is different, but between 8 to 10 hours of sleep is recommended for young people aged between 13 and 18 years.

The number of hours of sleep you need can depend on many things including your stage of development and how much growth and learning your body is still doing. The younger you are, the more sleep you will need to make sure you can develop and be properly alert during the day. Therefore, knowing what is usual for you can help to know whether sleep is becoming problematic.

If you are worried, try and keep track of how many hours you have got each night over a week. If it is less than 8-10 hours and you feel that you are not managing well on a day to day basis, try some of the sleep tips we have included in this leaflet.
What can sleep difficulties look like?

Sleep problems are very common. Some people might find it more difficult to get to sleep; others may wake up in the middle of the night and find it difficult to get back to sleep again; and some may wake up too early and so feel tired later in the day.

There are a variety of reasons why we might find getting enough sleep to be tricky. For example, not having good sleeping conditions, having daytime naps and having an overactive mind (through watching tv/being on devices, or worrying). You might be concerned if you are getting frequent nights of sleep problems and it is impacting on your ability to function on a day to day basis.
Top tips for getting a better night sleep

1) Make sure you have a quiet, dark, comfy room and bed to fall asleep in
   - You’ll probably get a better night sleep if you’re not too hot or too cold.
   - Try and fall asleep lying down to avoid waking up.

2) Wind down before going to bed
   - Have a warm bath before bed – the drop in your body temperature after your bath can leave you feeling sleepy, so it is important to give yourself some time to cool off.
   - Read a book or magazine – something relaxing and easy.
   - Listen to relaxing music.
   - Try some relaxation strategies – try the Simple Habits or Calm apps.
   - Try not to use your phone or other device for at least one hour before bed – light tells our brains it is time to be awake, so having lots of it just before bed might make it more difficult to fall asleep or might make you wake up in the middle of the night.
3) Keep a good routine

- We all have our own sleep routine which our bodies prefer. Our body will start sending out signals when it feels it can be awake or when it feels it needs to sleep. For instance, waking us up naturally and yawning.

- These signs will tend to be at similar times of the day or evening.

- Try and listen to your body and get up or go to bed when it feels it’s had enough sleep or when it feels it needs to go to sleep.

- You might find that your body does not feel tired when the rest of the world is going to sleep. You can try and train your body so that it learns to feel sleepy when you are doing a certain activity. For example, having the same routine every night: watch TV, wash your face and brush your teeth. This can then become your brain’s cue to start winding down.
4) Avoid Napping

- Most people find night-time sleep easier if they haven’t napped during the day.
- However, other people say that a nap is refreshing and does not disturb their sleep at all.
- If you feel that you do need a nap, try and make sure it doesn’t last more than half an hour.

5) Exercise

- Try not to exercise at least four hours before bedtime. Exercise is stimulating and raises your body temperature. A drop in body temperature helps to make you feel more sleepy so a rise will keep you more awake for longer.
- Try and get some exercise during the day. There is good evidence to suggest that regular exercise improves the quality of your sleep. This includes stretching and more low impact exercise.
6) Pre-sleep snacks and drinks

- Try not to eat or drink anything with caffeine at least four hours before bedtime. Coffee, tea, hot chocolate and Coke are the main things to avoid.

- Try not to drink too many fluids two hours before bedtime – otherwise you might find yourself having to get up to go to the loo frequently in the night.

- Try not to eat a heavy meal too close to bedtime: maybe have a small healthy snack before you go to bed to make sure you don’t get hungry during the night – for example, an apple with peanut butter. This can also help to prevent night-time hypos. Your diabetes team will be able to advise on what might work best for you.
7) Try and settle your thinking and worries

- Do you ever find that you can’t sleep because you are worrying about something, or because you can’t switch off your thinking? Some people find that even if they don’t feel very worried about things during the day, their brains start worrying just as the lights go off. Worrying keeps your brain awake and stressed, making it more difficult to sleep.

- Therefore, try and manage your worries before you try and sleep so that when you do go back to bed you can focus on making yourself comfy and relaxed.

- About an hour before bed, think about whether there is anything worrying you.
- If there are lots of things, it might help to make a list and even try and plan how you might deal with each thing.

- After that, try and relax: read, listen to calm music, have a bath, try some mindful colouring, listen to a relaxation app.

- Try and remember that worries are much easier to deal with - or may not even seem like worries - during the day.

- Don’t try to force them out of your head, just gently remind yourself that you aren’t going to deal with them now and imagine them floating away in clouds or bubbles.

- Avoid working or planning your next day just before you go to bed as this will make your brain alert and make it difficult to sleep. You need to allow some time to ‘wind down’.
Some people find it useful to use the worry tree:

1. Notice the worry.
2. Ask: What am I worrying about?
3. Ask: can I do something about it?
   - NO. Let worry go.
   - YES. Action plan.
   - Change focus of attention.
   - What? When? How?
   - NOW. Do it!
   - LATER. Schedule it.
   - Let worry go.
   - Change focus of attention.

Adapted from Butler & Hope 2007
And finally…

Trying too hard to get to sleep can make it even more difficult to fall asleep. You might find it helps to only get into your bed once you are feeling sleepy. To make yourself sleepy, try: reading or listening to something relaxing; colouring; a relaxation app; having a bath. If you are tossing and turning in bed getting worried about not being able to sleep, get out of bed and do something relaxing. Avoid looking at your phone. Once you feel sleepy again go back to bed. This will help your body link being cosy in bed with sleep.

Don’t be disappointed if you try some of these tips and they don’t help straightaway. It is very normal that it takes a while for a new routine to start working. Give it a chance to really see whether it could work for you. It might be a good idea to try it for two or three weeks before deciding whether it helps.

Here are some good relaxation Apps which might help:

- Simple Habits
- Calm
- Hospichill
- Shleep/ELS
The key points to remember:

- Go to sleep comfy and lying down
- Wind down before bed
- Keep a good routine
- Avoid napping
- Exercise
- Have a small snack before bed if you’re hungry
- Try and settle your thinking and worries – the worry tree

FAQs:

1. What if I only get a few hours sleep and I’m tired in the morning?

Don’t panic! Try and carry on as normal and be reassured that you’ll probably get a very good night sleep that night. To train your body to get more good nights sleep it is important to try and go to bed and get up at the same time each day (including weekends).
2. **What about my diabetes?**

The main thing to remember is to check your blood glucose levels before you go to bed so that it is at a safe level before you go to sleep. Your diabetes team will be able to inform you on how best to make sure you are safe through the night.

If you find that you are getting very little sleep over consecutive weeks, go and see your GP. Having a long period of time without good sleep can raise your body’s cortisol levels. More cortisol can result in higher blood glucose levels and also make you feel hungrier and therefore snack more, which might make it harder for you to control your blood glucose and weight.
Contacts/further information

Please contact any member of the children’s diabetes team for more advice on getting a good night sleep.

References:

- Oxford University Hospitals
- Diabetes UK
- CHOC Children’s
- Worry Tree – Butler & Hope 2007
Notes:

Use this page to write anything that was particularly helpful for you from this leaflet and any ideas you have had which might help you to get a better night’s sleep