

When Sleep Won't Come

A gentle guide for the nights when your mind and body won't settle



Rest still matters, even before sleep arrives

First, take the pressure off

You cannot force sleep. Telling yourself that you “must” sleep can make your body more alert. Tonight, the aim is not perfection - it is to create enough safety and calm for rest to become possible.

If your mind is racing

- Write down the thoughts or tasks you are carrying so your brain does not have to hold them all night.
- Try a slow breathing rhythm, such as in for 4 and out for 6, without demanding that it makes you sleep.
- Use a familiar audio, gentle story or quiet background sound if silence feels too loud.

Help your body recognise night

- Keep your wake-up time reasonably consistent and get daylight during the morning where possible.
- Dim lights and reduce stimulating activities before bed. Make the room comfortable for your sensory needs.
- If you remain wide awake, move to a quiet, dim place and return to bed when sleepiness comes.

What I want you to remember tomorrow

A difficult night can make everything feel heavier. Lower the demands where you can, eat and drink regularly, avoid driving if you feel dangerously sleepy, and speak kindly to yourself. One poor night does not mean every night will be the same.

Please speak to your GP if

Sleep problems have lasted for months, changing habits has not helped, or poor sleep is affecting your daily life and ability to cope. Ask about medicines, pain, hormones, anxiety and other possible causes.

Mention these signs

Loud snoring, gasping or choking, breathing that stops and starts, morning headaches or severe daytime sleepiness may need assessment for sleep apnoea.

You are not failing at sleep

Your body may be stressed, uncomfortable, overstimulated or out of rhythm. It deserves curiosity and support - not criticism.

Space to Breathe Therapy | Support Hub information resource

Information only - not a diagnosis or substitute for medical care. Sources checked August 2026: NHS insomnia, sleep problems and sleep apnoea guidance.