

# Sleep Tips

## Learning Relaxation

Relaxation is one of the most powerful ways of reducing stress. It helps by:

- ▶ Relieving the tension that builds up in your body when you experience too much stress
- ▶ Clearing your mind of worrying and negative thoughts

### **A simple exercise is to practise deep breathing:**

Stress causes you to breathe in a shallow, quick way. Deep breathing will help you relax by slowing your body down and giving it more oxygen. Although this exercise can be practised in a variety of poses, the following is recommended:

- ▶ Lie down on a blanket or rug on the floor
- ▶ Bend your knees and move your feet about eight inches apart with your toes pointed outward slightly. Make sure your spine is straight
- ▶ Scan your body for tension
- ▶ Place one hand over your abdomen and one over your chest
- ▶ Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose into your abdomen to push up your hands as much as feels comfortable. Your chest should move only a little and only with your abdomen.
- ▶ Continue to breathe deeply noticing your muscles becoming more relaxed.
- ▶ It may take a few minutes to achieve slow deep breathing, so give yourself time!



## Getting a good night's sleep

If you are often tired, irritable and not giving your best during the day, you may need more (or better quality sleep).

Here are some sleeping tips:

- ▶ Regularly practising a relaxation exercise in the evening can help you prepare for sleep
- ▶ Try not to read, eat, work or watch TV in bed. Your bedroom must be a place associated with going to sleep.
- ▶ If you can't get to sleep after about 15 minutes, get out of bed and do something not too stimulating (e.g. watch TV or read a book) in another room. Once you feel sleepy again, go back to bed. Repeat the process if you still can't get to sleep.
- ▶ Keep to a routine at night as much as possible, so your body recognises it as a signal to wind down, ready to sleep.
- ▶ Don't have a heavy meal just before bed, as your body will be working hard to digest it.
- ▶ If you do have coffee or cigarettes at night, don't have them too close to bed time

