

# Learn how to improve your sleep, diet and exercise:

Simple and practical tips from  
Level 0 of the online Me Power  
Academy<sup>®</sup> School Success  
programme.



# WHAT SHOULD I EAT?



To produce and grow new neurological connections your brain needs energy, building blocks and antioxidants.



# ENERGY

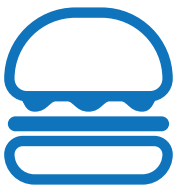
The brain's fuel source is glucose – a form of sugar. Although your brain only makes-up around 2% of your overall body weight, it uses 20% of your oxygen and 25% of your glucose.

Carbohydrates are the body's main source of glucose. Foods that release glucose slowly – complex carbohydrates – tend to be natural, unrefined foods. These types of foods provide a better and more consistent source of energy for your brain than sugary and processed foods. So you should always try to eat complex carbohydrates like green vegetables, whole-grain or whole-wheat bread, whole-wheat pasta and brown rice, sweet potatoes, beans, lentils and peas.



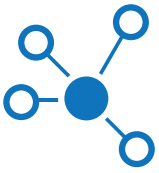
# BUILDING BLOCKS

The brain is a fatty organ, and so needs fatty acids to make it work properly. Specifically, the brain needs omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids. So your diet should contain these if you want your brain to work well. Typically we eat too much omega-6, but not enough omega-3. To boost your omega-3 levels you can eat cold-water fish like tuna and salmon, and oily fish like mackerel. Kiwi fruit, soya beans, spinach, flax seeds, chia seeds and walnuts are also sources of omega-3 fatty acids.



# JUNK FOOD

It is also important to point out that there is strong evidence showing that junk food can quickly damage brain function, particularly the hippocampus.



# ANTIOXIDANTS

Another consequence of inadequate nutrition that can be damaging to brain function is known as free radicals. However, a group of molecules known as antioxidants can be used to combat the negative effect of free radicals. Antioxidants include vitamins E and C, and alpha lipoic acid. Foods that contain vitamin C include oranges and other citrus fruits, red peppers, kale, broccoli and strawberries. Foods that contain vitamin E include almonds, spinach, sweet potato, avocado, chard and trout. Finally, foods that contain alpha lipoic acid include broccoli, liver, kidney, spinach, potatoes and carrots.

## Summary

So, what you eat can help or hinder your learning and your ability to change and develop. To boost learning you need to eat complex carbohydrates, foods which contain omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids, and foods which contain antioxidants.

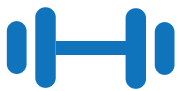
# BOOSTING EXERCISE





## IN MINUTES

Walking is classed as exercise. The government recommends that young people do at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous aerobic exercise every day e.g. cycling, brisk walking, running or playing tennis.



## BONES & MUSCLES

The government recommends that on three days per week young people do exercises that encourage strong bones and muscles e.g. swinging on playground equipment, hopping and skipping, and sports such as gymnastics or tennis.



# SWEATING

It is important that your exercise makes you sweat/perspire. Walking quickly is a good way to do this.

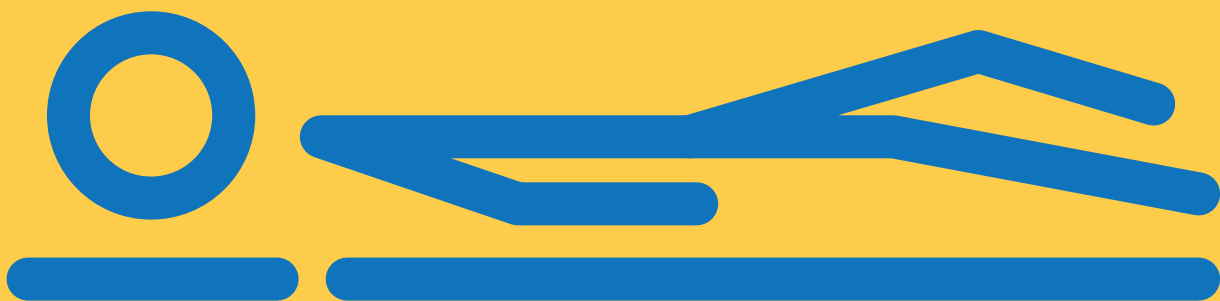


# TRACKERS

There are many apps and physical activity trackers available that can be used as helpful ways of triggering and tracking beneficial levels of exercise.



# SLEEP INSIGHTS





# CONSISTENT SLEEP PATTERNS

The time you get up in the morning has an impact on the time you can go to sleep in the evening. So it might be difficult to fall asleep early on a Sunday night if you overslept on Sunday morning. Keeping sleeping habits regular throughout the week is important for good, consistent sleep.



# EXERCISE

Doing enough exercise during the day can help you to sleep better in the evening.



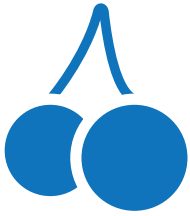
# CAFFEINE

Caffeine is found in coffee and tea and some sports drinks. How much caffeine you consume during the day, and when you consume it can make an impact on your ability to fall asleep. Data shows that consuming caffeine six hours before going to bed has a negative impact on sleep.



# ALCOHOL

Children and young people are advised not to drink alcohol before the age of 18. Alcohol use during the teenage years is related to a wide range of health and social problems. Drinking alcohol can damage a young person's health, even if they are 15 or older. It can affect the normal development of vital organs and functions, including the brain, liver, bones and hormones. Although alcohol can make you fall asleep quickly, it reduces sleep quality. This means that alcohol is unhelpful for sleep. Many high-performing sports and business people rarely or never consume alcohol.



# SOUR CHERRY JUICE

Research studies in adults shows that those who drank two glasses of sour cherry juice per day achieved an extra 34 minutes of sleep per night. The studies claim that sour cherries contain high levels of melatonin, a hormone responsible for sleepiness.



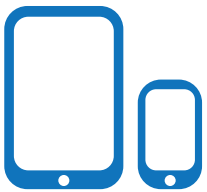
# FOOD

Eating small carbohydrate and protein snacks before bed can aid a good night's sleep.



## SOCIAL MEDIA

Checking social media before bed can make you feel anxious, and therefore make it difficult to fall asleep, and get good quality rest.



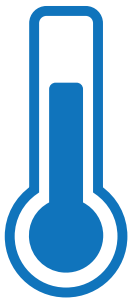
## TECHNOLOGY

The light produced from your smartphone, tablet or laptop can make your brain think that it is daytime. So using your electronic devices up to one hour before you go to bed can inhibit sleep.



# HYDRATION

Dehydration can make it more difficult to fall asleep, and reduce sleep quality. It is recommended that men drink around 2 litres, and women 1.6 litres of water per day - these are only average numbers, and everyone's individual needs will be different. It is also important to remember that all drinks contain water, but that some will hydrate you and others dehydrate you. For example, caffeine (found in coffee and tea) is a diuretic which can cause dehydration.



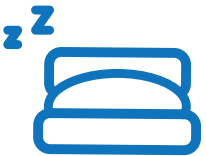
# ROOM TEMPERATURE

Sleep is triggered as body temperature reduces. If your bedroom is too hot it will be difficult to fall asleep.



# GETTING BACK TO SLEEP ROUTINE

Many people wake up in the middle of the night and struggle to get back to sleep. This becomes an unhelpful and unwanted habit. To break this habit you should build a 'get back to sleep' routine. Here is one example routine that many people have found useful: wake up in the middle of the night; do not check the time as this can add pressure to get back to sleep; go to the bathroom; have a glass of water and half a banana; do not check your phone; get bed into bed and read a book until you are ready to fall back to sleep.



## DARK, QUIET & CALM

Humans are designed to sleep when it is dark, quiet and you feel calm. Make sure your bedroom and sleeping practices help to promote all three factors.