

March 2020

Why can't I sleep during the lockdown?

If you're struggling to sleep at the moment you're not alone.

Despite having more time to rest than ever before, good sleep is hard to get in lockdown if you're spending all day at home.

Many of us are having the same difficulties.

Our body's circadian rhythm play a big part in governing when to eat, wake up, work hard and even when to fall asleep.

A disruption to our normal 'body clock' (like being in lockdown) can have drastic effects on how we sleep.

What is circadian rhythm?

Basically it's your body's internal clock which tells us when it is time to do things.

During the day our body has a rhythm that orders release of hormones, your appetite and the way our body uses food and so on.

These are all related to your internal clock. It is controlled by a part of the brain (the suprachiasmatic nucleus) which is impacted by light.

When it detects light you produce awakening hormones which make you feel energetic.

Absence of light causes sleepiness' hormones that make you feel tired.

When the circadian rhythm is out of whack it can similarly change your sleeping pattern so you feel alert and wide awake at night but exhausted in the morning.

Why Now?

One reason may be the blue light from computer and phone screens. If we spend more time on devices at night, (than usual) this can throw out our daily rhythm.

Being in lockdown also throws out our rhythm.

We may be eating at different times, and not exercising as we normally would do.

Exercise is a great way of keeping you in daily rhythm.

Added to this, spending more time inside and stress and worries due to job loss and finances and relationships.

Our daily schedules of wake, breakfast, drive to work, come home, dinner and bed may be quite different now that many of us are tied to home. Our schedule is off-balance which pushes our 'body clock' out of synch.

But we have more freedom to do things now, than ever before?

That may be the problem!

Lockdown allows us to dictate our own schedule- so perhaps instead of getting up so early to go to work, we may stay in bed, maybe start later and work later- exposed to late night screens and lights and more awake in the evening.

What can we do?

Consider your daily routine.

Do something during the day that is predictable. It can be work or exercise.

Routines are good- get up and be active. It's all too easy to become lazy and this can snowball and manifest into fatigue and depression or other mental health issues. A late rise from bed can follow on to late breakfast, late lunch and late dinner.

Mind and meditation or mental exercises can help with lowering stress.

Use the extra time at home constructively- do some light exercise- this can give you a sense of purpose for the day and also release serotonin to make you feel better.

Remember- exercise at a level that you feel the benefit but not the pain.