



Royal College
of Physicians

Setting higher standards

The Student and Foundation Doctor Network (SFDN) is proud to introduce our new bulletin on **physician wellbeing**. As we spend our days looking after the health of patients, all too often we neglect aspects of our own health. This bulletin aims to address some major themes around personal wellbeing and help all of us optimise our lifestyle to cope with our daily experiences on the wards, in the library and at home.

Every edition will focus on one theme and tackle it in a variety of ways. One aspect is through education, which enables greater understanding and the ability to develop our own coping strategies. Another is through practical advice, which enables you to try out some activities that have worked for others.

Each month the bulletin will bring you:

- an article written by a guest expert in the field
- practical tips
- a selection of related scientific literature
- tips for you from your peers
- further reading.

We hope you enjoy this content and developing your approach to wellbeing. Please contact us at sfdnetwork@rcplondon.ac.uk to share your experiences and we will select some to be featured on the website – and on the next bulletin, focusing on nutrition.

... **ZZZ** ... **ZZZ** ... **ZZZ**

This month, we are focusing on the important topic of **sleep**. We have a wonderfully comprehensive essay from Professor Russell Foster, director of the Nuffield Laboratory of Ophthalmology and the head of the Sleep and Circadian Neuroscience Institute at the University of Oxford. We also have some short practical tips you can try out in your daily practice, a brief look at a few scientific literature articles on sleep, some personal anecdotes from the ward and further reading if you would like to delve deeper into the subject.

How to get better sleep...

The complexity of sleep generation and regulation renders this critical behavioural state extremely vulnerable to disruption. Some of the consequences of this disruption include increased emotional responses, impaired cognition, and an increased risk to physiology and health.

[Read Professor Foster's whole essay](#)

Top tips for a good slumber

1. Develop a **simple bedtime routine** and try and stick to it as much as possible.
2. Avoid using any electronic devices one hour before bed and **disable any alerts**.

3. **Blue filter modes** can be useful if you have to use electronic devices before bed. Phones often have these built in, and free apps with these features such as 'f.lux' can be easily installed on your computer.
4. **Know how much sleep** you personally need, then work backwards to ensure you're getting the minimum. Then if you're finding you're staying up too late, try to sleep earlier every night little by little. For example if you find you're staying up to 1am then try to sleep 20 minutes earlier the next night and so on until you reach your target.
5. If you can't seem to switch off your brain, try getting up and **writing down a to-do list**. Some people find that this 'off loading' stops rumination and they are able to return to a restful sleep afterwards.
6. Try **including some 'me time'** during the day. This can be any activity you do for yourself, whether that is reading a book, having a long bath, listening to a podcast, reading a kindle book or doing some yoga to relax before bed.
7. Try some **mindfulness and meditation** before bed. Some people find mindfulness apps such as 'Headspace' helpful, and they often come with 'sleep casts' especially to help sleep.
8. Having **a morning routine** and incorporating **regular exercise**, as well as a **balanced diet**, can help you to wake up naturally at the right time for your working day, which can really help long term.
9. **Avoid working in bed** if you can so that your bed and bedroom will not be associated with work.
10. Avoid eating or drinking alcohol or caffeine **too close to bedtime**.
11. Ensuring **your room isn't too warm or cold** can really help.
12. If you do find yourself tossing and turning, get out of bed, **distract yourself while in dim lighting** until you feel sleepy again.
13. Extra little things such as eye masks and bed socks may help you sleep as it helps create **a comfortable environment**.
14. As tempting as it may be, **avoid having daytime naps**, as this can reduce the quality of your night-time sleep.

Well-reading we'd recommend

Promoting alertness with a short nap during a night shift

Finnish academics have found that a short nap is a feasible countermeasure for sleepiness in night work although it is unable to keep alertness at the level observed at the beginning of the night shift. It is, however, noticeable that during the first 10–15 minutes after waking from a short nap some sleep inertia (grogginess) may exist.

Key points: In 14 oil refinery workers who worked cyclical shift patterns including evening and night shifts, naps of either 30 or 50 minutes improved alertness in the middle part of a night shift.

Discussion: Can you say whether this is practicable for foundation doctors or whether this is catered for by provisions in hospitals?

[Read this study](#)

The metabolic consequences of sleep deprivation

The prevalence of diabetes and obesity is increasing at an alarming rate worldwide and the causes of this pandemic are not fully understood. This article reviews the current evidence in support of three mechanisms that might link short sleep with increased obesity and diabetes risk.

Key points: This summary looks at the laboratory evidence for sleep loss having an adverse impact on glucose regulation, as well as epidemiological studies which suggest the sleep deprivation carries an increased risk of development of type 2 diabetes and obesity.

Discussion: Is sleep a modifiable risk factor for primary prevention of the above diseases?

[Read this article](#)

Increased injuries on the night shift

Concern over safety has resulted in legislation by, for example, the EU, to limit the number of hours worked at night. There is, however, no direct evidence that injuries are more frequent at night. The researchers analysed all 4,645 injury incidents reported for a year on a rotating three-shift system in a large engineering company where the a-priori accident risk appeared to be constant.

Key points: Analysis of injuries sustained at an engineering firm where theoretical risk of injury remained constant, showed that the relative risk of sustaining injury was higher on night shift than morning shift. The type of work also affected the pattern and type of injury.

Discussion: Can you mitigate risk by postponing non-urgent high-risk tasks until daytime?

[Find this article](#)



Tips from your peers

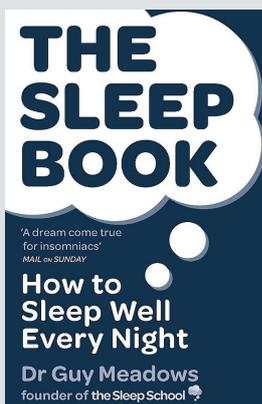
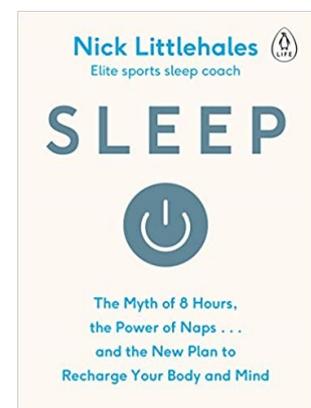
'I've found that using an old fashioned alarm clock and charging my smartphone outside the my bedroom has meant that I go to sleep much quicker than previously. Prior to this, I always checked my phone for 30–45 minutes before getting annoyed with myself that I'm going to make myself tired for the following morning.'

Books for your nightstand

Sleep by Nick Littlehales

It's no secret that athletes are eager to boost their performance, and in the last two decades, addressing sleep routines and sleep hygiene have become vogue. Nick Littlehales has worked with Olympians, Manchester United and Team Sky Cycling, and he shares the tips and tricks that elite athletes use daily in a bid to maximise their potential.

Could other high-performance professions learn from their athletic counterparts?



The Sleep Book by Dr Guy Meadows

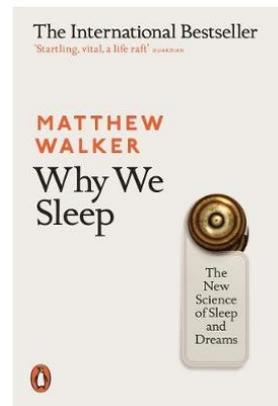
Aimed at the 15% of chronic insomnia sufferers throughout the UK, Dr Meadows shares his recommended strategy for combating insomnia. Tried and tested during his role as the clinical director of The Sleep School in London, this medication-free plan offers the struggling insomniac an alternative approach.

With the night shift and weekend commitments facing many doctors, are there insomniacs within our profession who are suffering in silence?

Why We Sleep by Matthew Walker

Appreciation and recognition of sleep as a fundamental pillar of good health has been lost in modern societies. Dr Walker, a leading sleep neurophysiologist, explains the myriad functions of this mysterious activity and touches on the startling epidemiological evidence that implicates inadequate sleep in a range of chronic diseases.

As doctors, educating ourselves on the value of sleep is critical in allowing us to correctly advise our patients.



New RCP mental health and wellbeing resource

This [mental health and wellbeing resource](#) has been created to help our members recognise the warning signs in themselves and others, as well as know about the steps you can take to stay well and seek the right support when you need it. It also shines a spotlight on what the RCP is doing to influence and improve the healthcare system in which we work. It is divided into eight sections: the size of the problem; knowing yourself better; looking after yourself; opening up the conversation; recognising possible triggers; getting help when you need it; sharing experiences; and wider RCP resources.

[Visit the website](#)

We hope you've enjoyed the new SFDN wellbeing bulletin and we're looking forward to supporting the wellbeing of medical students and foundation doctors through future editions!

Kind regards,

SFDN committee

sfdnetwork@rcplondon.ac.uk

