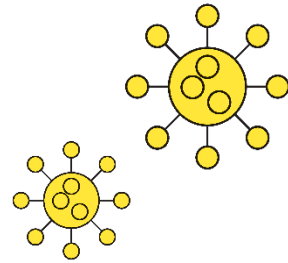# NZDF COVID-19 EFFECTIVE SLEEP HABITS

These are tried and true ways of improving your sleep patterns. Start small. Make one or two changes, stick with them and see if you notice improvements in your sleep and daytime functioning. Remember it takes time to establish new habits but over time the changes you make will become second nature.

1. **Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day**. Pick a time that you can maintain during the week and on weekends, then adjust your bedtime to target 7-8 hours of sleep. This allows your body to settle into a routine. Even in the weekend try and keep your sleeping patterns constant to avoid disrupting your circadian rhythm.

2. **Make your sleeping environment quiet, cool and dark – like a cave.** Some noise will be out of your control. If it bothers you, use earplugs or a source of white noise such as a fan. Adjust your room temperature, bedding and clothing so that you will be comfortable and less likely to wake up sweating or shivering. Darkness stimulates our body to secrete melatonin, a hormone that promotes sleep so close the curtains or block out light by covering your eyes with a mask or clothing.

3. **Plan** the next day's activities early in the evening, well before you get into bed. If you think of something you need to remember, get up and write it down. This will help to postpone thinking or worrying about it until the next day.

4. **Establish a pre-bed routine**. This may be one thing, or a series of tasks that you do every night before jumping into bed. The routine should take about 30-60-minutes and should be enjoyable – so that you want to do it. Think of things that relax you such as taking a shower, taking the dog outside, stretching, meditating, reading or listening to quiet music.

5. **Avoid napping during the day** if you are having difficulty getting to sleep at night, this will help build up your sleep drive.

6. **Reduce your intake of caffeine**. Coffee, tea, energy drinks and some soft drinks that contain caffeine tend to disrupt your sleep. Instead try herbal teas that contain natural ingredients to help you fall asleep and have a restful night.

7. **Avoid large quantities of fluid** at night and avoid **alcohol** for 5 hours before bedtime. Alcohol may help you fall asleep, but it will disrupt and reduce the quality of your sleep.

8. **Avoid bright light** at least a few hours before going to sleep. Don't work on the computer late in the evening. If you have to, use a blue light filter to reduce the impact of blue light emissions.

9. **Don't go to bed hungry** but avoid eating a heavy meal too late at night. A light, healthy snack may be the best option.

10. **Associate your bed with sleep.** Using the bedroom only for sleep and intimacy will train your mind to sleep when you get into bed. Keep electronic distractions like the TV, laptop, and your phone out of your bedroom

11. **Use relaxation techniques** to help you to fall asleep, and to go back to sleep if you wake during the night. Many mindfulness apps have guided sessions designed to help you sleep better.

12. **If you can't sleep, get out of bed** and go to another room and do something soothing until you feel sleepy again. Don't try too hard to go to sleep, try telling yourself statements like "If I don't get a good night's I will tomorrow night." Be kind to yourself.

13. **Try not to check the time during the night.** This may cause you to stress or start calculating the hours, minutes and seconds until you have to get up. Just cover it up or take it out of the room.

14. **Exercise regularly**. Exercise three to six hours before going to bed. Getting your heart pumping during the day increases your need for sleep and will allow you to sleep more restfully.

Check out the F4F COVID-19 PAGE for useful contacts & resources related to this topic. Relevant apps include CBT i-Coach and Sleep Cycle.