

**Sleepstation**



# Free sleep guides for ACO members

18th May 2020

[sleepstation.org.uk](https://sleepstation.org.uk)

# We're here for you

Everyone has trouble sleeping from time to time and the coronavirus pandemic has, understandably, disrupted sleep for many. We've partnered with the ACO to provide a solution.

In our recent [survey](#), the largest of its kind in the UK, **77% of people reported that lack of sleep is interfering with their ability to function.** By acting quickly, we're confident that we can reduce the number of people at risk from chronic sleep problems, and subsequent depression, as a result of the coronavirus crisis.

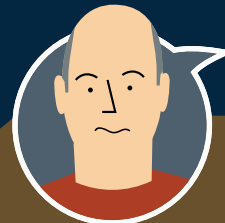
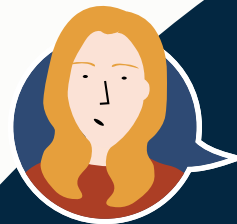
We're already working with a number of ACO members, including the Charity for Civil Servants, to provide support to their communities. We're now offering free sleep guides to all ACO members.

**We'll tailor your free sleep guide to speak to your audience.** To request a free guide please email:

[wellbeing@sleepstation.org.uk](mailto:wellbeing@sleepstation.org.uk)



**Alison Gardiner**  
Chief Executive



# Who are we and how can we help?

Sleepstation is an **NHS accredited** sleep improvement programme. Our service is delivered entirely online. We have a **secure online messaging service** that we use to discuss problems in a safe and confidential way. Our online service is a proven alternative to clinic-based services and can be more effective than a traditional approach to resolving sleep issues.

We've supported many thousands of people this way:

[sleepstation.org.uk/patient-stories](https://sleepstation.org.uk/patient-stories)

In addition to our work with the NHS, we support benevolent funds and employers across the world to make our services available to the people they employ and the communities they support.

We typically help people with long-term (chronic) sleep problems. Sleep problems can become chronic when they aren't addressed quickly enough. We hope that the advice in this guide will help you to manage new sleep problems effectively to stop them becoming chronic.



# Working with Sleepstation

Jill White, Head of Wellbeing at The Charity for Civil Servants, describes her experience of working with Sleepstation over the last 12 months.

The pages which follow provide a **sneak preview of your free sleep guide**, based on the version that we created for The Charity for Civil Servants.

*“The Sleepstation programme is adding **enormous value** to us as a Charity. This is a new, exciting and innovative approach for us as an organisation and **working with Sleepstation has been a dream!**”*



**Jill White, Head of Wellbeing**  
The Charity for Civil Servants



[Play video](#)



Sleepstation

The Charity for  
Civil Servants

# Guide to better sleep

Specific support for civil servants

April 2020

[sleepstation.org.uk](http://sleepstation.org.uk)



# Were you sleeping well before this pandemic only to struggle with sleep now? There could be an easy fix

During this period of uncertainty, it's perfectly natural to have sleep problems. **We're living through an unprecedented global challenge.** Many of us are experiencing higher than normal levels of stress because of COVID-19.

Stress, or anxiety, can be particular problems for sleep as they put the brain into a state of arousal (high alert) which makes it more difficult to sleep well.

If there's something to be concerned about, it makes sense for us to be awake so that we can respond to the problem. This is a natural protective response. **We remain alert when we feel under threat, to protect us from danger.** It wouldn't, for example, make sense to be asleep if there was a wolf in the bedroom.

However, COVID-19 isn't a wolf that could creep up on you in the night and being awake isn't going to help you fight it. In fact, losing sleep is probably going to have the opposite effect. **If you're struggling to sleep at the moment, the advice in this guide can help you sleep better** and good sleep is one of the most effective ways of dealing with stress.



# Small changes can make big differences

**This guide provides practical advice to help you sleep better.**

The advice in this guide is evidence-based and very effective. We know, from many decades of research in this area, that small changes can make big differences. You may not have to change too much but it could make a big difference to your sleep.



This guide has been prepared by **Dr Neil Stanley, our resident Sleep Expert.** Neil has been involved in sleep research for 38 years. He started his career at the Neurosciences Division of the R.A.F. and later became Director of Sleep Research at the University of Surrey. He has published 38 peer-reviewed papers.



# Get some sunlight

**Try to spend at least 30 minutes each day in natural sunlight.**

- Exposure to sunlight (especially morning light) improves sleep.
- We get Vitamin D from sunlight and certain foods.
- Vitamin D can help protect against acute respiratory infections.

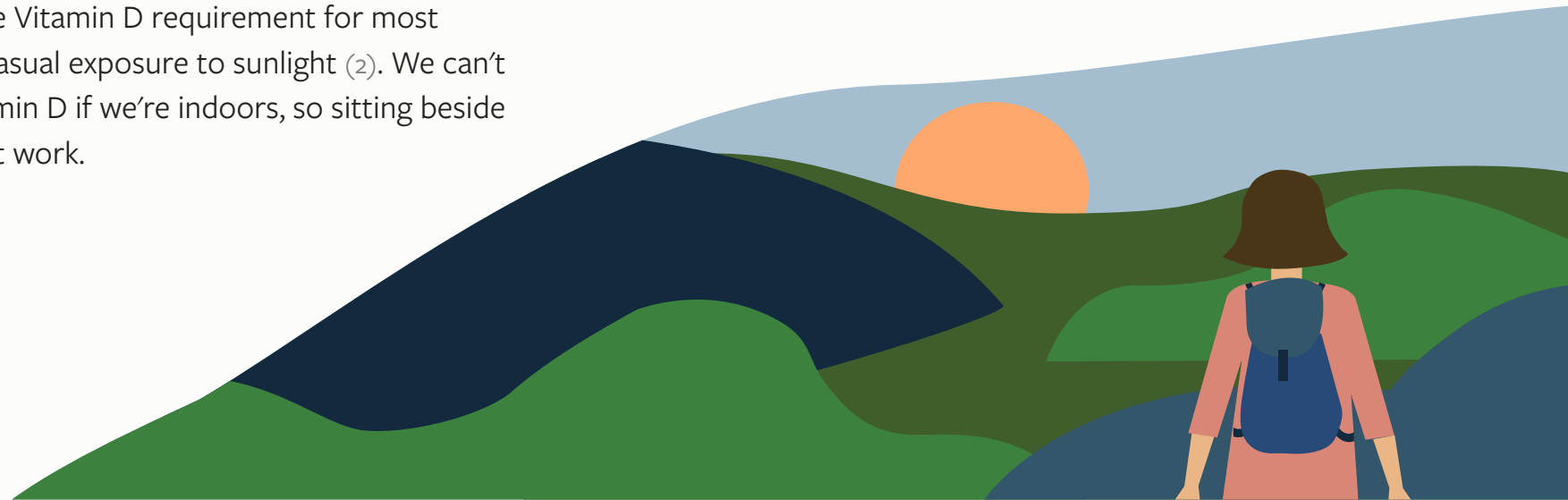
Vitamin D helps us absorb calcium which is a critical mineral in the formation of strong bones. Significantly, there is also data which shows that Vitamin D at the correct level can help protect against acute respiratory infections (1).

More than 90% of the Vitamin D requirement for most people comes from casual exposure to sunlight (2). We can't photosynthesise Vitamin D if we're indoors, so sitting beside a sunny window won't work.

Our food can also be an important source of Vitamin D, especially if we are unable to get outside.

Foods that contain Vitamin D include: oily fish such as salmon, sardines, pilchards, trout, herring and kippers and also cod liver oil, egg yolk, meat, offal and milk. Some foods, such as certain breakfast cereals, are also fortified with Vitamin D.

It is essential for good physical, mental and emotional health that you get some outdoor exposure to daylight or eat foods that contain Vitamin D.



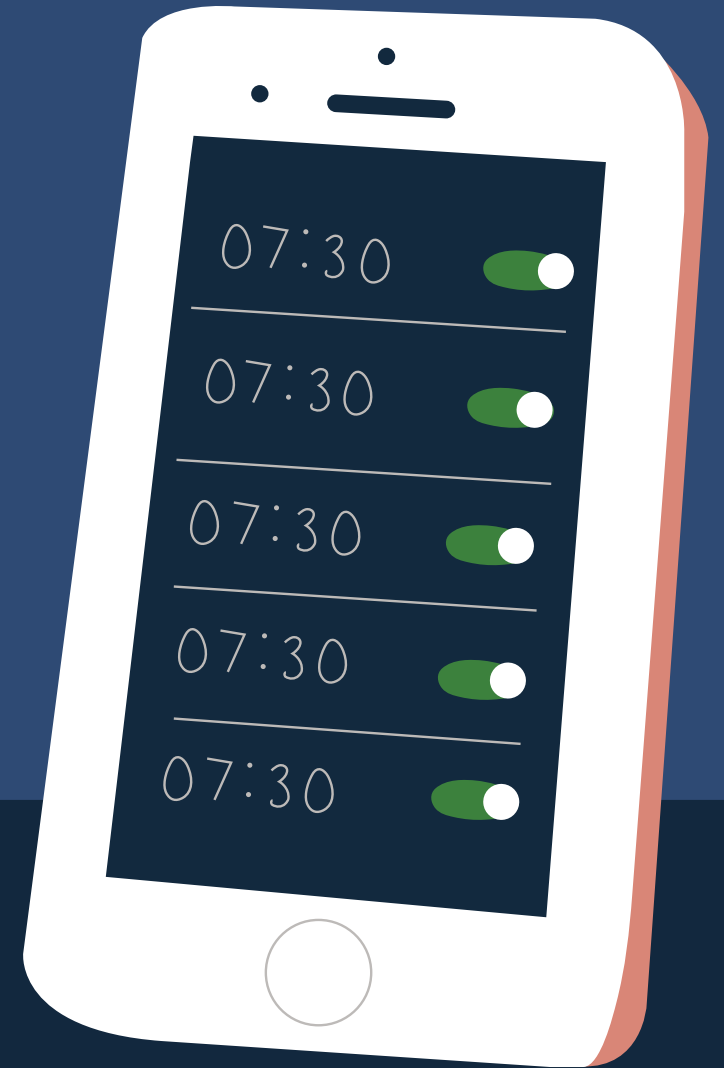


# Try to maintain a routine, if possible

We understand that this might be the hardest thing to do, given that many of the measures being introduced in response to this crisis aren't under our control. However, you can improve your sleep and reduce anxious feelings by:

- Getting up at the same time each day (if you're not working variable shifts).
- Exercising regularly (pick something you enjoy).
- Making sure to get outside in the daylight each day (while maintaining a good distance from others).

**The body craves consistency** and having a regular wake up time can improve sleep.



# The bedroom

The bedroom should be **a sanctuary reserved for sleep** and the sleep environment needs to be pleasant and relaxing (get rid of the TV and computers). Avoid doing daytime activities in the bedroom.

It should be **dark** - either use heavy curtains or an eye mask, and it should be as **quiet** as possible. If this is difficult, then consider using comfortable earplugs.

The **bed should be comfortable** and as **big** as you can fit into your bedroom. A standard double shared by two adults gives each adult less space than they would have in a single bed.

The bedroom should not be stuffy, as **fresh air is good for sleep**, and it should be neither too hot nor too cold.

Many experts say that **the ideal temperature for the bedroom is 16-18°C** (60-65°F) although this is, again, a matter of personal preference.



# Under the covers

It's not just the room temperature that is important for getting a good night's sleep. The temperature in your direct sleeping environment - i.e. under the duvet - is equally important.

This temperature should be as close to a thermo-neutral temperature (approximately 29°C) as possible.

**During the night the body needs to lose heat** and this is done mainly through the head and face - the only bits that usually stick out from under the duvet. A cool bedroom facilitates this heat loss.

However, if the room is too hot or you're too hot under the duvet, then it's more difficult for the body to lose heat and this will cause disturbed sleep. The same is also true if you're too cold as this means the body has to work hard to maintain its optimal temperature and again this can disturb sleep.

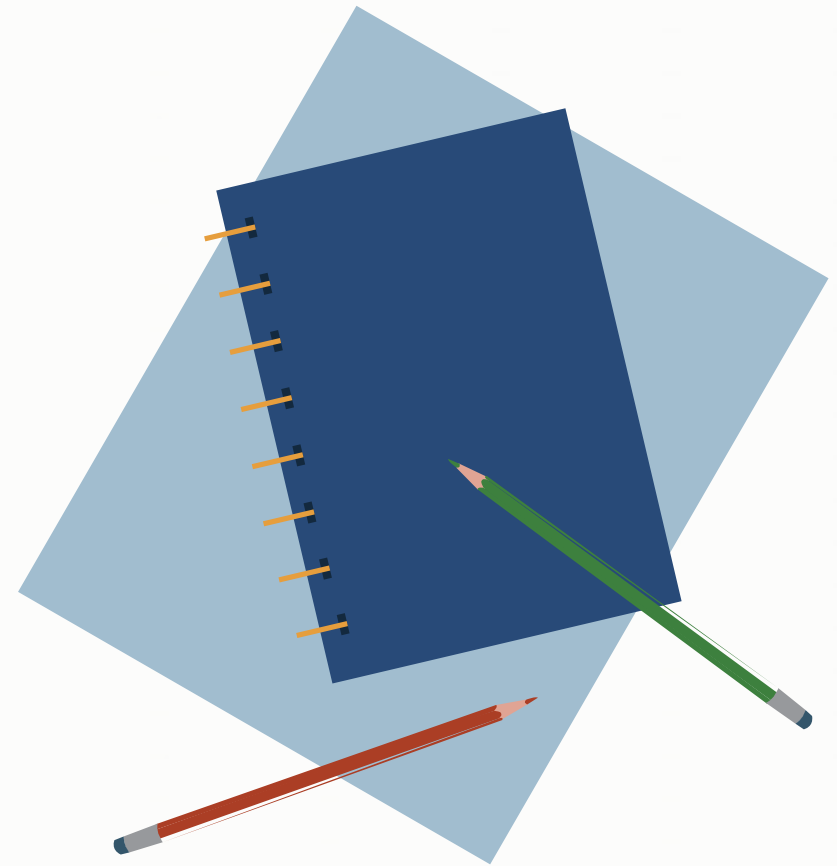
**Achieving an optimal temperature under the bed covers is essential.**



# Fact check - sleep and immunity

You might have read one of several articles focusing on sleep and the immune system. Many of these stories suggest that poor sleep can increase your chances of being infected by the common

**The content of your guide will be tailored for your audience.**



# What would speak to your audience?

You can choose to include any of the topics below in your customised guide. We may also be able to create specific content to meet your requirements.

- Techniques to control sleep
- Do sleeping pills work?
- Sleep as we age
- Sleep advice for shift workers
- Switching off for sleep
- Sleep and stress
- Sleep and performance
- Sleep and mood
- Learning to relax
- Coping strategies for managing anxiety
- Sleep in pregnancy
- PTSD and sleep
- Sleep and cancer
- Pain and sleep
- Can lack of sleep lead to Alzheimer's?
- Sleep for Heroes
- When to ask for help



# Other guides in this series

To request a customised guide to better sleep for the people you support, simply email [wellbeing@sleepstation.org.uk](mailto:wellbeing@sleepstation.org.uk) or call **0333 800 9404** and ask to speak to Paul Barron or Michael Buck.

## Other guides in this series

- Children's sleep - advice for parents
- Sleep advice for shift workers
- What is sleep?
- How much sleep do I need?

