

# Mental health in primary care

## Sleep problems

### Common symptoms

- ➔ Difficulty falling asleep
- ➔ Frequent awakening
- ➔ Early morning awakening
- ➔ Restless or unrefreshing sleep



- ➔ Difficulties at work and in social and family life
- ➔ Makes it difficult to carry out routine or desired tasks.



### Common causes

#### Psychological:

- ➔ Depression
- ➔ Anxiety
- ➔ Worries
- ➔ Stress.

#### Physical:

##### Medical

##### problems:

- ➔ Overweight
- ➔ Heart failure
- ➔ Nose, throat and lung disease
- ➔ Sleep apnoea
- ➔ Narcolepsy
- ➔ Pains.

##### Medications:

- ➔ Steroids
- ➔ Decongestants
- ➔ Others.

#### Lifestyle:

- ➔ Too hot or too cold
- ➔ Tea, coffee and alcohol
- ➔ Heavy meal before sleep
- ➔ Daytime naps
- ➔ Irregular sleep schedule.

#### Environmental:

- ➔ Noise
- ➔ Pollution
- ➔ Lack of privacy
- ➔ Over-crowding.

## What treatments can help?

*Supportive therapy is the preferred treatment*

#### Supportive therapy for:

- ➔ stress/life problems
- ➔ depression
- ➔ worry
- ➔ changes in lifestyle and sleep habits.

#### Medication:

- ➔ for temporary sleep problems
- ➔ for short term use in chronic problems to break sleep cycle.

## About medication

### Short term

- ➔ use for short period of time.

### Long-term

- ➔ when used in the long term, there may be difficulties stopping, leading to dependence.

### Side-effects

- ➔ are important to report.

### Harmful

- ➔ when alcohol and other drugs are used.

### Ongoing review

- ➔ of medication use is recommended.

## Lifestyle change strategies

- ➔ Try to minimize noise in your sleep environment, if necessary consider ear plugs.
- ➔ Try to make sure that the room in which you are sleeping is not too hot or cold.
- ➔ Reduce the amount of alcohol, coffee and tea that you drink, especially in the evenings.
- ➔ Try to avoid eating immediately before going to sleep.
- ➔ Try to have your dinner earlier in the evening, rather than later.
- ➔ Don't lie in bed trying sleep. Get up and do something relaxing until you feel tired.
- ➔ Have regular times for going to bed at night and waking up in the morning.
- ➔ Reduce mental and physical activity during the evenings.
- ➔ Increase your level of physical activity during the day; build up a regular exercise routine.
- ➔ Avoid daytime naps, even if you have not slept the night before.
- ➔ Use relaxation techniques, for example, slow breathing.

## Slow breathing for relaxation

- ➔ Breath in for three seconds
- ➔ Breath out for three seconds
- ➔ Pause for three seconds before breathing in again
- ➔ Practise for 10 minutes at night (five minutes is better than nothing).

### More evaluation may be needed:

- ➔ if someone stops breathing during sleep (sleep apnoea)
- ➔ if there is a daytime sleepiness without possible explanation.