

CLARITY GUIDES

In a world full of disinformation, get Clarity.

REST · RELAX · RECOVER

SLEEP & RELAXATION

*A clear guide to better nights: how sleep works,
what really helps, and when to get support*



Published by Clarity Guides · Cover: Vincent van Gogh, *Starry Night over the Rhône*, 1888, Musée d'Orsay, Public domain

Preview – full guide coming soon – goclarity.uk

ABOUT THIS GUIDE



We spend about a third of our lives asleep, yet most of us were never taught how sleep works or what to do when it goes wrong.

This guide explains the science of sleep in plain language, looks at how people have slept through history, and sets out what genuinely helps, from proven treatments such as CBT for insomnia to relaxation techniques you can try tonight. It is honest about what the evidence does and does not show, including for popular products and supplements.

UNDERSTAND	Why sleep matters, how it works, how much you need, light and Scottish seasons, dreams, and sleep through history.
FIX	Insomnia and CBT-I, 3am waking, common problems, mental health, jet lag, partners and snoring, ageing, and when to see your GP.
RELAX	Eight relaxation techniques with step-by-step “Try it” boxes.
DO	What helps and what doesn’t, sleep myths, supplements, children’s sleep, a two-week reset, a quick toolkit and a sleep diary.

Our three labels. **RECORD** means something shown by a published study, an official guideline or a historical source. **LEGEND** means a story, belief or tradition that cannot be checked. **MODERN** means a modern idea, product or method. We also use “What people report” and “What the evidence says” boxes side by side.

Not medical advice. This guide is for general information and education only. It does not diagnose or treat any condition and does not replace your GP, pharmacist or a sleep specialist. If you snore loudly and stop breathing in your sleep, fall asleep while driving, or have long-lasting insomnia, low mood or anxiety, please speak to your GP (chapter 27).

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WHY SLEEP MATTERS

Sleep is not switched-off time. While we sleep, the brain and body carry out work that cannot be done as well while we are awake.

RECORD Research links good sleep with memory and learning, mood and emotional balance, immune function, appetite control and safe driving. In laboratory studies, people deprived of sleep do worse on attention and reaction-time tests, feel more irritable and anxious, and eat more.

RECORD Over the long term, large population studies find that people who regularly sleep much less than seven hours (and also those who sleep much more than nine) have higher rates of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity and depression. A 2010 meta-analysis (Cappuccio et al., *Sleep*) pooling 16 studies of more than 1.3 million people, found short sleep (usually under 6 or 7 hours) was associated with a 12% higher risk of death over the study periods, and long sleep (usually over 8 or 9 hours) with a 30% higher risk.



Frederic Leighton, *Flaming June*, 1895, Museo de Arte de Ponce. Public domain.

Association is not cause. Poor health can cause poor sleep, as well as the other way round, and long sleep is often a sign of illness rather than its cause. Some popular books have overstated the dangers of short sleep. The take-home message is calm, not alarming: sleep is one of the pillars of health, alongside food, movement and relationships, and most sleep problems can be improved.

♦ TIREDNESS AND DRIVING

RECORD Driver fatigue contributes to a significant share of serious road crashes. If you feel drowsy at the wheel, stop somewhere safe (not the hard shoulder), have two cups of coffee or another caffeinated drink and rest or nap for about 15 minutes. Opening a window or turning up the radio is not an effective way to stay awake. Plan a 15-minute break every two hours on long journeys.

Sources: Cappuccio, F. P. et al. (2010) *Sleep* 33(5); Walker, M. P. & Stickgold, R. (2006) *Annual Review of Psychology* 57; Irwin, M. R. (2015) *Annual Review of Psychology* 66; Lim, J. & Dinges, D. F. (2010) *Psychological Bulletin* 136(3); THINK! road safety advice; Road Safety Scotland, "Driver fatigue".