

A Guide On
SLEEP MATTERS




CLARITY
Happiness Within Your Reach

About Us

Clarity Singapore is a Catholic mental health charity that provides services to persons with mental health conditions – helping them to live meaningful lives through support, therapy, acceptance and recovery. We work with individuals between the ages 15-65 that are at risk of or struggling with mental health conditions arising from anxiety and depression, including trauma, pre and post-natal depression, stress, bereavement and loss, relationship and other emotional issues.

Hello There!

Sleep is a fundamental part of our lives, yet it's something many of us struggle with at times. Whether it's a busy schedule, stress, or simply not knowing how to improve your sleep, poor sleep can affect every aspect of your well-being.

In this resource, we'll delve into everything you need to know about sleep—the importance of good sleep, how it affects your mental and physical health, and what happens when we don't get enough sleep. You'll also discover practical tips and techniques to help you improve your sleep quality and build healthier sleep habits.

From,

Clarity Singapore



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How Sleep Works



Our sleep cycles through of 4 stages: Three non-rapid eye movement (REM) sleep stages and one REM sleep stage. These stages progress in a cycle multiple times throughout the night, and typically last about 90 minutes each.

Sleep cycles can vary from person to person based on a wide range of factors such as age, sleep patterns, and alcohol consumption.

1

Stage 1 non-REM sleep marks the transition from being awake to falling asleep. During this brief, light sleep stage, your body starts to relax, and your brain waves start to slow from their daytime activity. This stage typically lasts a few minutes.

2

Stage 2 non-REM sleep is a light sleep stage that occurs before entering deeper sleep. During this phase, your heartbeat, breathing, and brain activity slow further, muscles relax, body temperature drops, and eye movements stop. This stage makes up the largest portion of your sleep cycle.

3

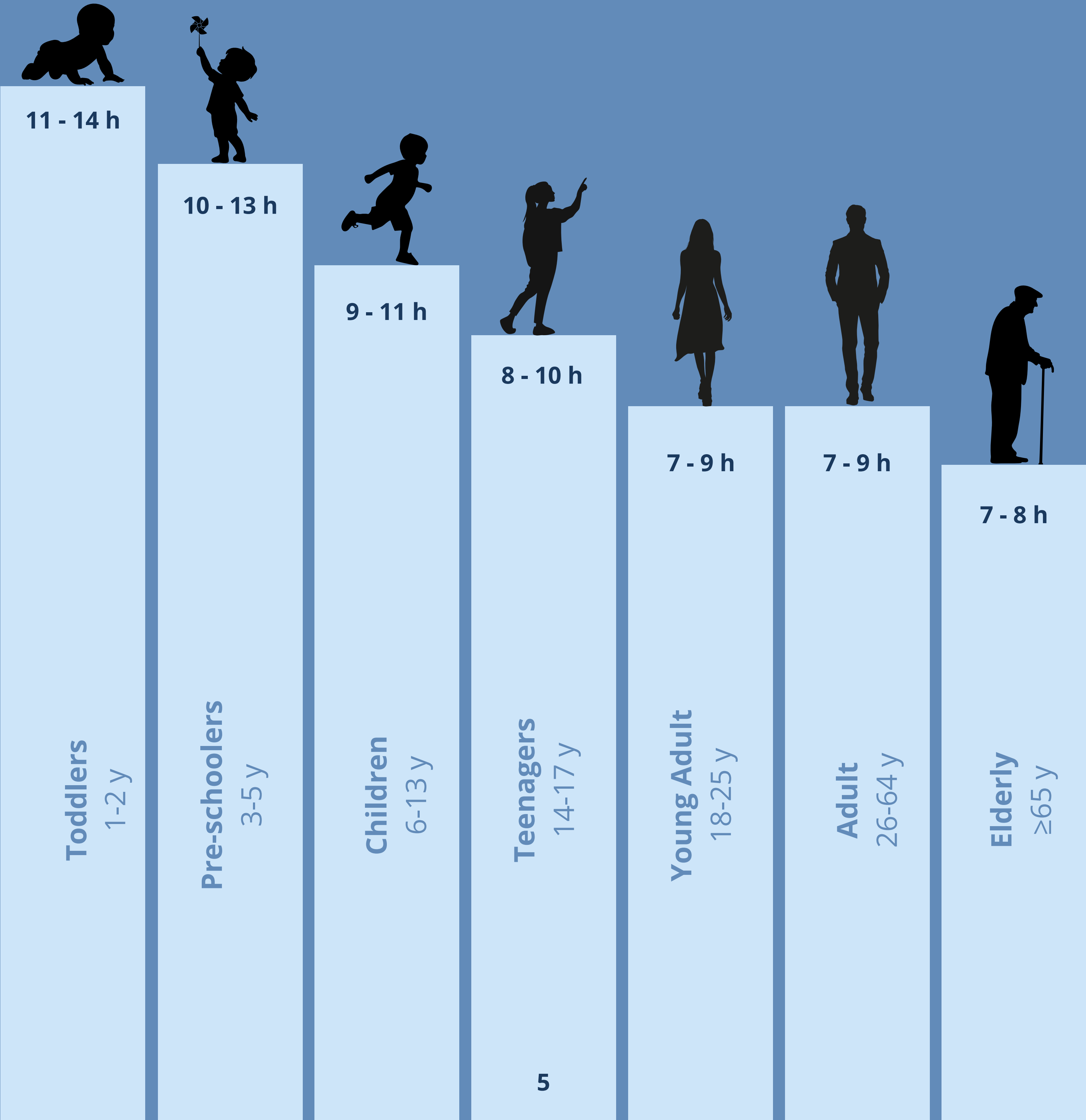
Stage 3 non-REM sleep is the period of deep sleep that is essential for feeling refreshed in the morning. During this stage, heartbeat and breathing reach their slowest, muscles fully relax, and brain waves slow significantly, making it hard to wake up. This stage makes up a large portion of your sleep cycle.

4

Stage 4 REM sleep REM sleep begins about 90 minutes after falling asleep. Your eyes move rapidly, brain activity, breathing, heart rate, and blood pressure increase to levels resembling wakefulness. Most dreaming happens in this stage, with temporary muscle paralysis that prevents you from acting out your dreams.

How Much Sleep Do We Need?

The amount of sleep we need varies by age. Younger children require more sleep for growth and development, while adults generally need 7-9 hours for optimal health. Older adults may require slightly less. The graph below shows the recommended sleep duration for different age groups to help you understand the ideal amount of rest needed at each stage of life.



Importance of sleep

Sleep and Mental Health

Sleep and mental health share a bidirectional relationship. Poor sleep can be a trigger for mental health challenges, while struggling with mental health can make it harder to get restful sleep, creating a cycle that can be difficult to break. Below are some ways that sleep can affect mental health.



Emotional regulation

When you're well-rested, your brain is better equipped to process emotions, maintain a balanced mood, and handle stress more effectively. This helps in reducing feelings of irritability, anxiety, and frustration that build up throughout the day.

On the flip side, poor sleep can make it harder to regulate emotions. This increases the likelihood of negative behaviors, such as lashing out at others or objects instead of processing their feelings calmly.



Reduce risk of anxiety and depression

Sleep helps us process emotions more effectively, manage stress, and maintain a stable mood. Poor sleep, on the other hand, disrupts this balance and can lead to heightened emotional sensitivity, increased stress levels, negative thinking patterns, and a greater risk of mental health issues like anxiety and depression.

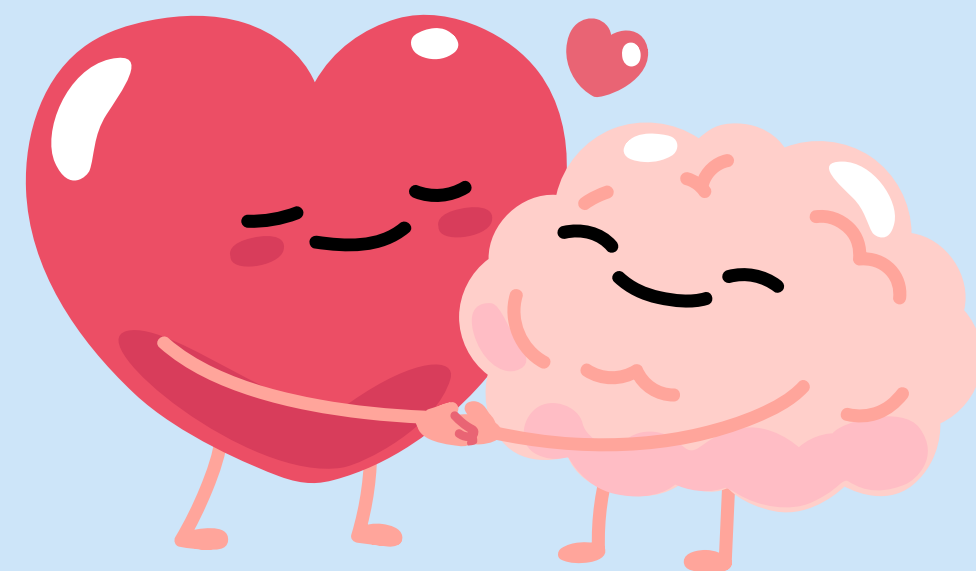
Interestingly, sleep treatments involving the use of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) for sleep has been shown to significantly reduce depression, anxiety, nightmares, and improve psychological well-being and overall functioning.

If you are experiencing sleep difficulties and noticing a decline in your mental health, please reach out to a healthcare professional for support.



Sleep, Physical Health, and Cognition

Sleep plays a crucial role not only in our mental well-being but also in our physical health and cognitive abilities.



Appetite and Weight

Not getting enough sleep can make you feel hungrier than usual. It can also affect your ability to make smart food choices, often leading you to crave unhealthy foods, such as food high in sugar and fat. Over time, this can increase the risk of weight gain, obesity, and impact your overall health.

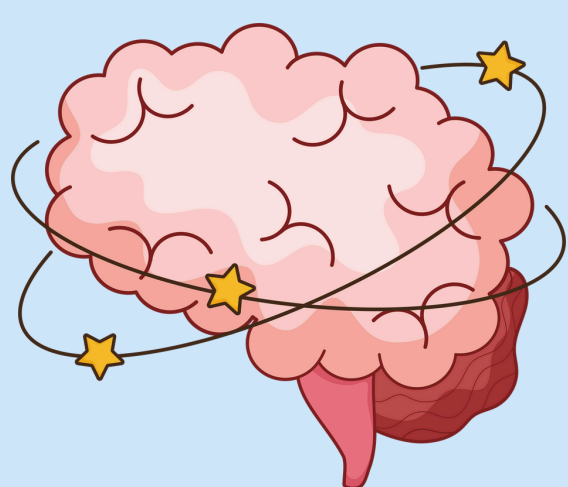


Healthy Immune System

While you sleep, your body works to repair itself, fight off infections, and produce immune cells that help defend against illness. Lack of sleep can weaken this defense, making you more vulnerable to sickness. Research shows that people who sleep less than 5 hours a night are 4.5 times more likely to catch a cold compared to those who sleep over 7 hours.

Heart Health

Sleep helps regulate the body's blood pressure and supports overall cardiovascular health. When you're well-rested, your heart rate and blood pressure naturally lower, which can help prevent heart disease over time. In fact, research has shown that people who sleep less than 5 hours a night, or sleep excessively for more than 9 hours, have a higher risk of developing heart disease and high blood pressure.



Cognitive function

Sleep plays a vital role in cognitive function, directly impacting your concentration, productivity, judgment, and problem-solving skills. Sleep is also well known to facilitate memory consolidation. During sleep, your brain organises and stores information you've learned throughout the day. This process enhances your ability to recall facts, skills, and experiences, ensuring they're retained long-term.

Are you getting enough sleep?

Sleep Deprivation

Sleep deprivation means not getting enough sleep or having good sleep quality. Not getting enough sleep can lead to symptoms beyond tiredness, such as:

★ Health Problems

Not getting enough sleep can weaken your immune system, making you more prone to illness and infections. It also increases your risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and obesity.

★ Microsleeps

Sleep deprivation can cause brief, unplanned episodes of sleep called microsleeps, lasting only a few seconds. These can be especially dangerous if they happen while a person is driving.

★ Poor Emotional Regulation

Sleep deprivation can lead to irritability, frustration, low mood, negative thinking, and heightened feelings of anxiety. It also increases the likelihood of depression.

★ Cognitive Impairment

Lack of sleep reduces alertness and focus, slows reaction times, impairs logical reasoning, and makes tasks like reading complex sentences or solving simple math problems more difficult. This can lead to a decreased in productivity at school or work.



Sleep Disorders

Sleep disorders are conditions that disrupt sleep quality, timing, or duration, affecting a person's ability to function properly during the day.



Signs of a sleep disorder

Common signs of a sleep disorder include breathing issues, such as snoring, gasping, or choking during sleep. It also includes difficulties falling or staying asleep, having excessive day time sleepiness, and having unusual sleep behaviours, such as sleepwalking, sleep-eating, or bed-wetting.

Common sleep disorders

Narcolepsy

A disorder causing excessive daytime sleepiness, cataplexy, sleep disturbances or hallucinations when falling asleep or waking up.

Insomnia

Difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, or getting good quality sleep.

Sleep apnea

A condition where your airway repeatedly gets blocked during sleep, causing difficulty in breathing.

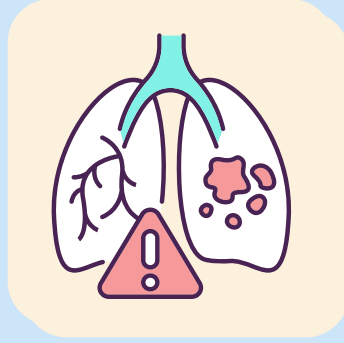
What might cause sleep disorders?



Age - Sleep patterns change with age, and some sleep disorders are age-specific.



Substances - Sleep can be affected by certain medications, caffeine, alcohol, and drugs.



Medical Conditions - Issues such as heart disease, lung disease, cancer, diabetes, and obesity are often linked to insomnia and sleep apnea.



Mental Health - Stress, depression, anxiety, and other mental health challenges can significantly impact sleep quality.



Schedule Changes - Disruptions like jet lag or working late-night shifts can disturb your sleep-wake cycle

If you're experiencing persistent sleep issues or suspect you may have a sleep disorder, please reach out to a healthcare professional for support.



What can you do to sleep better?

Paying attention to sleep hygiene is one of the simplest and most effective ways to improve your sleep quality. Below are some practical tips to help you develop better sleep hygiene.

Conducive Bedroom Environment

Keep the bedroom dark, cool, and quiet

Keeping your bedroom dark, cool, and quiet signals to your body that it's time to rest. Darkness helps boost melatonin production, the hormone that helps you feel sleepy. A cool temperature makes it easier for your body to lower its core temperature, which promotes restful sleep. Reducing bedroom noise is also important, as sudden sounds can cause disruptions, increasing brain activity and making it harder to stay asleep.



Follow a nightly routine



Go to sleep at the same time every day

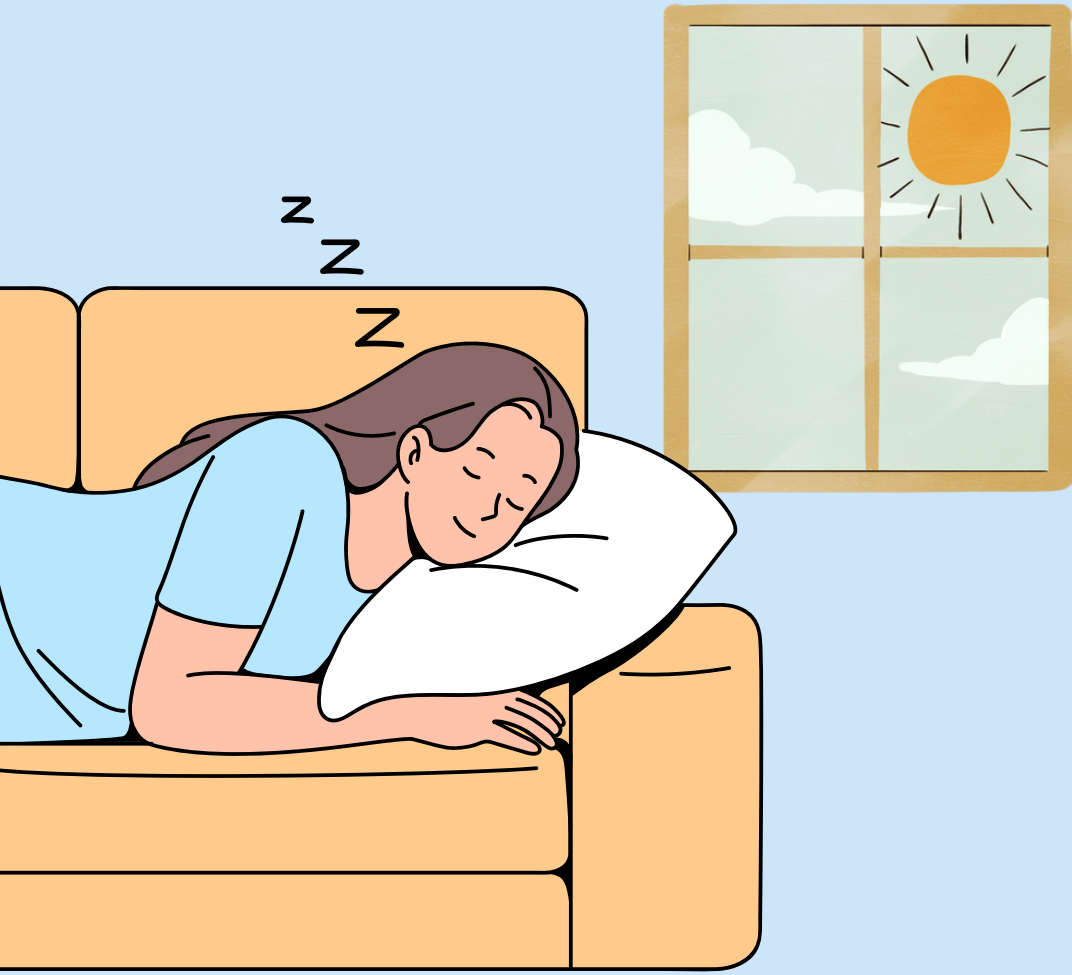
This helps your body get into a routine, making it easier to fall asleep and wake up at the same time each day. The consistency helps balance your circadian rhythm, which is your body's natural internal clock that regulates your sleep-wake cycle, making it easier for your body to feel alert during the day and sleepy at night.

Avoid using digital devices before bed

Using digital devices before bed can disrupt your sleep by reducing the production of melatonin, the natural hormone released in the evening that helps you feel tired and ready for sleep. This can lead to your brain staying more active and alert, making it harder to relax and fall asleep when you need to.



Cultivate healthy daily habits

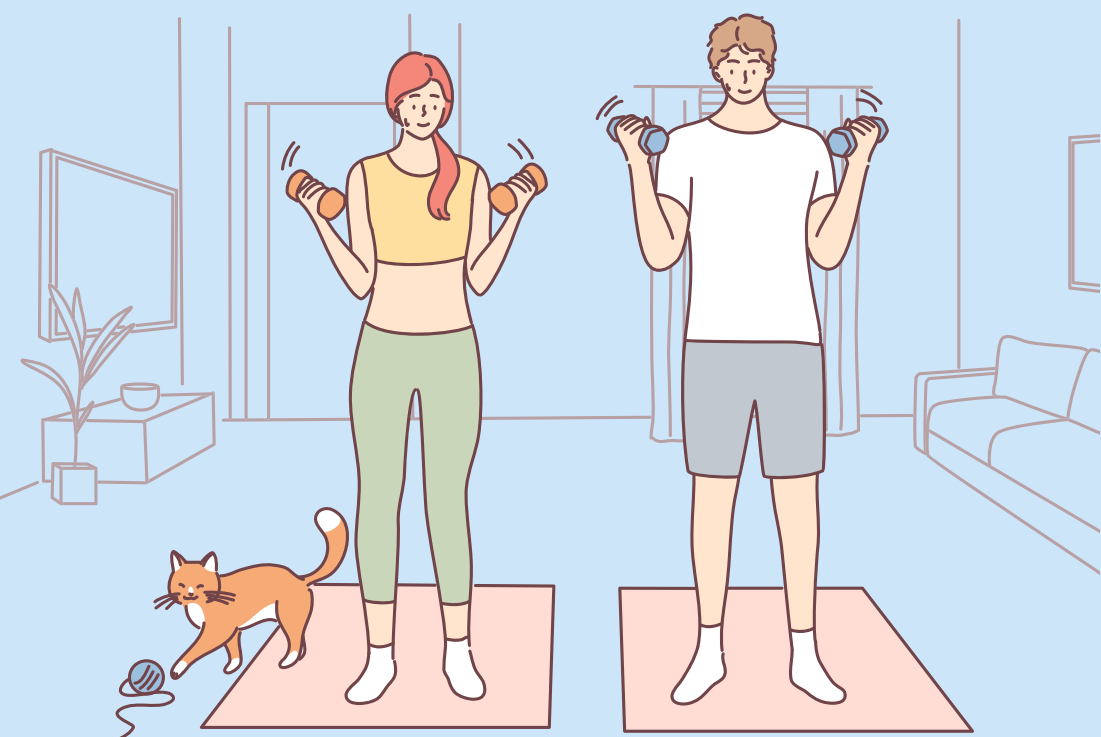


Only take daytime naps shorter than 30 minutes

Naps as short as 10 minutes can boost alertness and performance, making them a great way to recharge during the day. However, it's important to keep naps under 30 minutes, as longer naps can lead to grogginess and disrupt your nighttime sleep. Avoid evening naps as it can interfere with feeling naturally tired at bedtime.

Avoid eating too close to bedtime

Avoid having large meals close to bedtime as it can negatively affect your sleep quality. Eating too close to sleep can lead to stomach discomfort, heartburn, and reflux, which can make it difficult to fall asleep or stay asleep as your body is still working to digest food.



Engage in regular exercise

Exercising for at least 20 minutes a day can help to decrease the time spent in non-REM sleep stage 1 (very light sleep), while increasing REM sleep which leads to deeper, more restful sleep. Additionally, exercise helps regulate your energy levels and reduces stress, making it easier to relax and sleep well at night.

Avoid caffeine in the evening

Avoid consuming caffeine at least 6 hours before bedtime as it can disrupt both the quality and duration of your sleep. Caffeine works by blocking adenosine, a natural chemical in your brain that helps promote sleep. Throughout the day, adenosine builds up in the brain, making you feel sleepy as the evening approaches. By blocking its effects, caffeine keeps you feeling alert and awake, preventing your body from relaxing into a restful state.

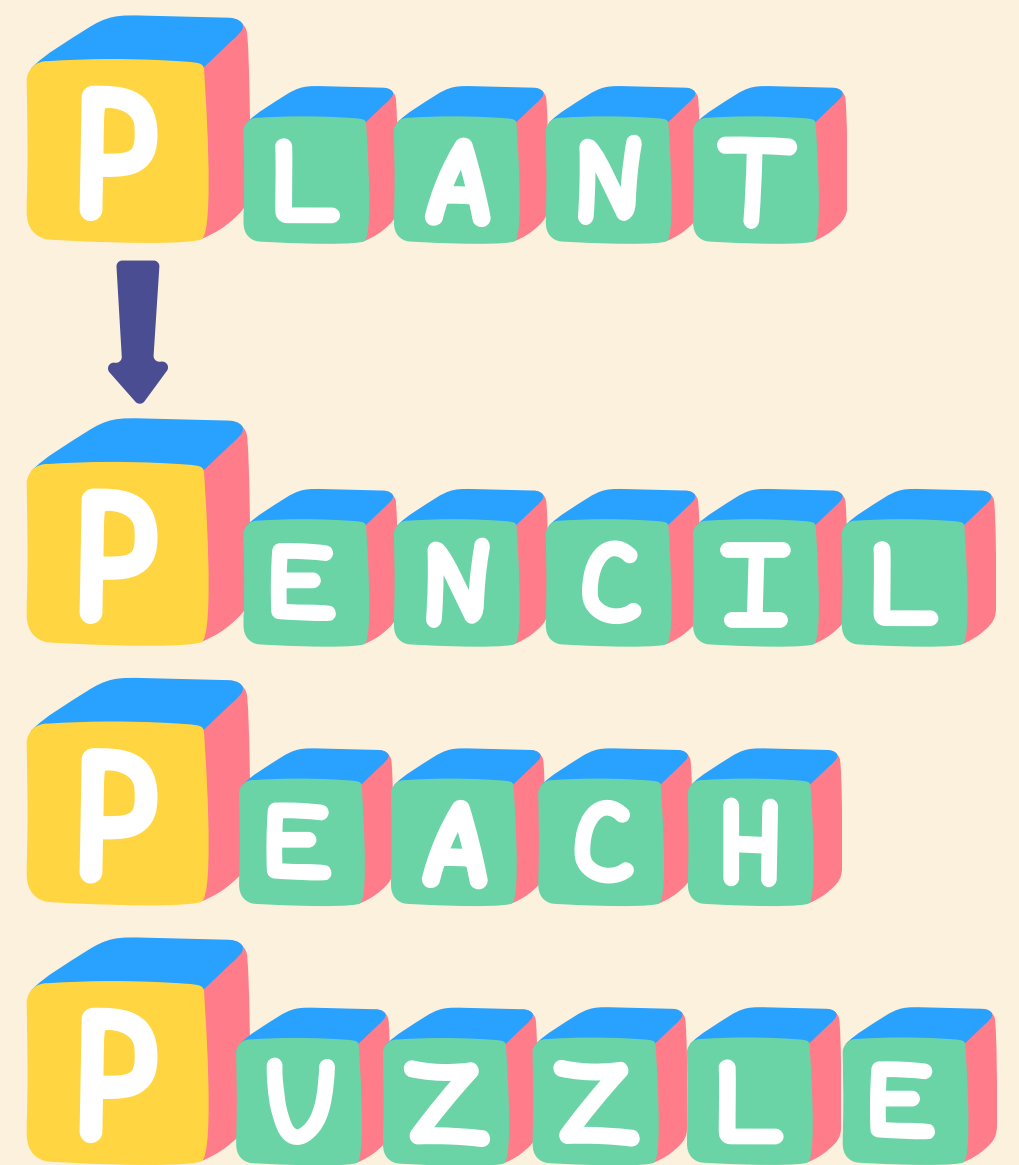


Techniques to help you fall asleep

Word Game

A cognitive scientist named Luc Beaudoin created a word game designed to help people fall asleep. Its repetitive and calming nature helps quiet the mind, promoting relaxation and drowsiness.

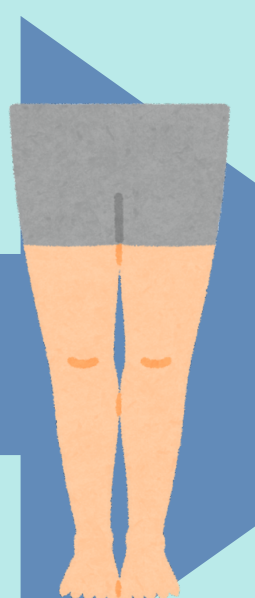
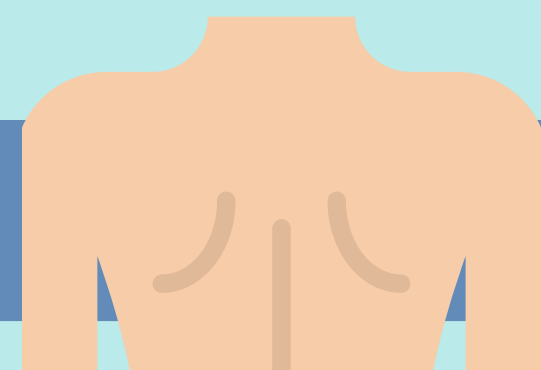
1. Choose a neutral word with at least five letters that doesn't have repeating letters, such as **plant**.
2. Think of as many words as you can that start with the first letter of your chosen word. For plant, you might list words like **paper**, **pencil**, **peach**, or **puzzle**.
3. Picture each word you think of in your mind.
4. Move on to the next letter in your chosen word and repeat the process.
5. If you feel sleepy before finishing the game, allow yourself to fall asleep.



Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) is a technique that can help you recognise and release tension in your body, allowing you to feel more relaxed. It involves deliberately tensing and relaxing different parts of your body to help loosen your muscles.

1. Find a comfortable position, either sitting or lying down, and focus on your breathing.
2. As you take a slow, deep breath in, tighten your fists and pay attention to how your muscles feel as they tense.
3. Slowly breathe out and relax your hands, noticing the tension leaving your muscles.
4. Continue this pattern of tensing as you inhale and relaxing as you exhale, working through different muscle groups like your shoulders, legs, or facial muscles.



Imagery

Imagery, or visualisation, is a relaxation technique where you imagine soothing or comforting scenes to help your body relax. You can try it on your own or use guided exercises available online or through apps.

1. Sit or lie down in a comfortable position and close your eyes. Take a few deep, steady breaths to settle yourself.
2. Visualise a serene and peaceful setting, like sitting by a gentle stream or walking through a quiet forest.
3. Focus on the sensory details of the scene
E.g., imagine the sound of water flowing, the warmth of sunlight on your skin, or the soft rustle of leaves in the breeze.
Notice how your body feels as you relax into the imagery.



Explore Guided Relaxation Techniques

If you'd like to try progressive muscle relaxation or imagery to improve your sleep, we've got you covered! Scan the QR code to check out our YouTube videos, where we guide you step by step through these techniques to help you relax and get a better night's sleep.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ClJc6tDA8QE>

Imagery



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=seOuH0vyyBM>

Sleep Resources

If you're finding it hard to get quality sleep or suspect you have a sleep disorder, do reach out to sleep clinics or specialists for professional support.

Ng Teng Fong General Hospital

Sleep Disorder Multidisciplinary Care

Tel: 6716 2222

Sengkang General Hospital

Sleep Clinic

Tel: 6930 6000

KK Women's and Children's Hospital

Address:

Tel: 6225 5554

Singapore General Hospital

Sleep Disorders Clinic

Tel: 6321 4377

Khoo Teck Puat Hospital

Department of Otolaryngology (ENT)

– Head and Neck Surgery

Obstructive Sleep Apnoea Clinic

Tel: 6555 8828

Tan Tock Seng Hospital

Department of Otolaryngology (ENT)

Sleep Disorder Clinic

Clinic 1B

Tel: 6357 7000

Changi General Hospital

Department of Sleep Medicine, Surgery
& Science

Tel: 6788 8833

Mental Health Resources

If you are experiencing sleep difficulties and noticing a decline in your mental health, please reach out to a healthcare professional for support.

EMERGENCY HOTLINES

Emergencies

999 / 995 OR approach the
A&E department of your
nearest hospital

Samaritans of Singapore

24-Hour Hotline

1-767

Institute of Mental

Health 24-Hour Hotline

6389 2000

PHYSICAL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

GP Clinics & Polyclinics

General Practitioners can refer you to
a mental health specialist in a public
hospital or private practice.

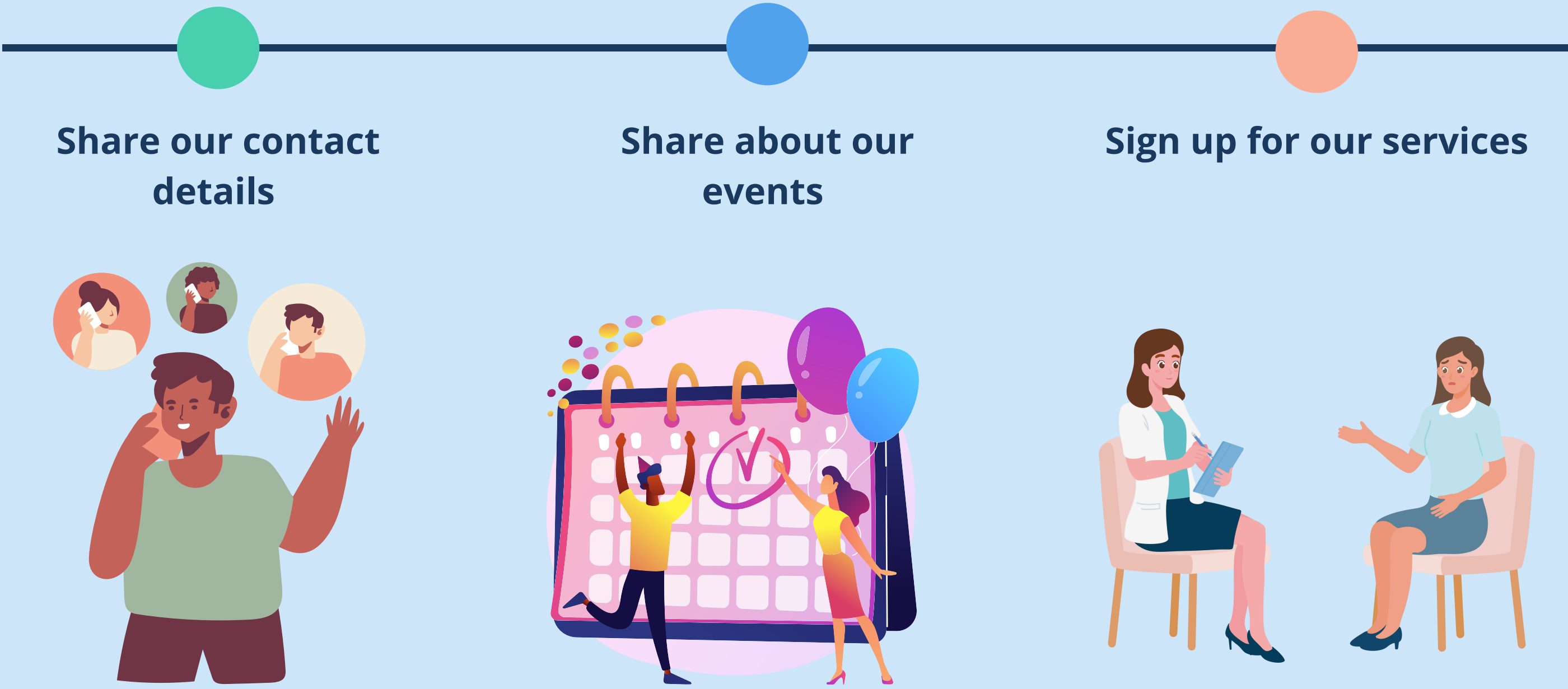
You may also visit your nearby polyclinic
to seek a mental health diagnosis or get
a referral to a hospital.

Our Contact Details

-  Main office: **Block 854 Yishun Ring Road, #01-3511, Singapore 760854**
-  Contact number: **6757 7990**
-  Email: **ask@clarity-singapore.org**
-  Website: **www.clarity-singapore.org**
-  Instagram: **@clarity_sg**
-  Facebook: **@claritysg**
-  Telegram: **t.me/claritysg**

Know someone who needs help?

Here's **what you can do** in 3 ways:



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