

Sleep

Correctional Health Services

Some people have trouble sleeping in a correctional facility, especially during the first weeks. This may be because of:

- › An uncomfortable mattress
- › A snoring cellmate
- › Officer noise
- › Anxiety
- › Safety concerns
- › Too much or not enough light
- › Flushing toilets

Tips to help you sleep better

- **Make your sleeping area as comfortable as possible.** You may wish to use these items (for sale in the canteen):
 - › **Earplugs** to help block out noise.
 - › **A radio with headphones** to listen to music. This may help you relax.
 - › **An eye mask** to help block out light (like overhead lights that are always on).
- **Be active every day.** This can help to get rid of extra energy, make you feel more tired, support your mental health, and make it easier to fall asleep. You may wish to:
 - › Exercise or move your body each day.
 - › Run (if you can use a yard or a track).
 - › Lift weights or do bodyweight exercises (like push-ups and squats).

Stop exercising a few hours before bedtime. This gives your body a chance to relax and get ready for sleep.

- **Keep a routine.**
 - › Get up at the same time every day.
 - › Keep a bedtime routine. Create a calming, consistent pre-sleep routine. This could include reading a book, stretching, or meditating.

- **Lower things that excite your brain.**
 - › Stop eating several hours before you go to sleep.
 - › Avoid eating junk food before you go to sleep.
 - › Avoid caffeine after 2 p.m.
 - › Avoid violent TV shows before you go to sleep. Try reading a book instead.
- **Write.**
 - › Before you go to sleep, write down any worries you may have. This can help to clear your mind and make it easier to fall asleep.
- **Meditate or practice mindfulness.** This may:
 - › offer comfort, peace, and hope.
 - › lower your anxiety.
 - › help you focus and calm your mind.
- **Try deep breathing.**
 - › Place 1 hand on your belly.
 - › Slowly breathe in through your nose for a count of 5 and out through your mouth for a count of 5. Do this for 5 minutes. It may help to imagine that you are smelling flowers as you breathe in and blowing out candles as you breathe out.
- **Change your negative thoughts by thinking of a positive memory** (like time spent in nature or with a friend).
 - › Close your eyes and picture the sights, sounds, smells, and sensations (feelings) until you feel calm.

This can help you to get control over your emotions (feelings).
- **Try a grounding exercise.**

Notice your surroundings, including the feeling of your body getting heavy on your mattress. Then slowly list:

 - › 5 things you can see
 - › 4 things you can touch
 - › 3 things you can hear
 - › 2 things you can smell
 - › 1 thing you can taste
- Count backward from 300 by 3.
- **Ask for medication.**
 - › A sleep aid called **melatonin** may be able to help you. This must be prescribed by a doctor through healthcare services. You may ask for it through a healthcare request.

Remember, it takes practice to make a habit. Try to be patient.

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