

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:
 - › **Earplugs** to help block out noise.
 - › **A radio with headphones** to listen to music. This may help you relax.
 - › **Blankets** to make your mattress softer. Make sure you are not too warm or too cold.
 - › **Extra pillows**, if available. You can also make one from your clothes.
 - › **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.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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