

PATIENT INFORMATION

A beginner's guide to good mental health

Information Guide

Welcome to Devon Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

A guide contains information for young people with depression and anxiety, and offers helpful tips and information on how to maintain good mental health.

Exercise

There is evidence that regular exercise is good at keeping you happy and mentally healthy. Young people should try and aim for 60 minutes of physical activity every day. That sounds like a lot, but you don't have to do it all in one go.

If you are not very active at the moment, try and build up gradually. Start with 15 minutes a day, and increase by five minutes every week.

Try and choose activities you enjoy – dancing, exercising with friends, walking the dog, throwing a Frisbee around. Have a look at what's on offer at the local leisure centre.

Eating

A healthy balanced diet is important for physical and mental good health.

- Eat breakfast – it really is the most important meal of the day
- Five-a-day – five portions of fruit and vegetables
- Fibre – swap white bread, pasta and rice for brown
- Water – drink plenty of water
- Stop eating when you're full
- Think about fat – try and swap saturated fats for unsaturated fats

Allow yourself the occasional naughty treat. For more information, look at www.eatwell.gov.uk/agesandstages/teens

Sleep

Try and get enough sleep. You may need more than you think. 12 year olds should aim for at least nine hours, and 18 year olds at least eight hours of sleep per night.

We may live in the 21st century, with computers, mobile phones, cars and TVs, but our bodies are just the same as they were thousands of years ago, when people lived in caves with no modern conveniences. Here are some helpful tips on how to get a good night's sleep, just like cavemen used to:

- Make sure your bedroom is quiet, dark, and a little bit cool – as much like a cave as possible.
- Avoid tea, coffee or cola – basically anything with caffeine in it. Try not to drink any caffeine after lunch.
- Trying to increase your exercise if you are having problems sleeping – young people need more exercise than adults, so try and get an hour of exercise a day.
- Get off the computer and the TV for at least one hour before bedtime. It's not just what you're doing on the computer or TV – the light from the screen is very stimulating and will keep you awake.
- Avoid going to bed hungry – make sure you're not too full, not too hungry, and try not to have sugary snacks late at night.
- Have a routine – try and establish a bedtime routine. Having a regular routine for getting up and having meals will also help your body click keep itself ticking over.
- Don't assume you can catch up on sleep by having a weekend lie-in.
- Share your worries – if there is something troubling you and keeping you awake, try to find someone who will listen to you and help you sort it out.

Activities

Make sure you spend time doing things you enjoy as well as things that make you feel good about yourself.

- Make a list of the things you enjoy doing
- Give yourself some small targets for "achievements"
- Keep going, even if you don't enjoy yourself at first – it may take some time.
- Praise yourself for trying

Get in touch

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Need more help?

Talk to an adult you can trust, for instance:

- Your mum or dad
- School nurse, teaching assistant, learning mentor, teacher
- Workers at your youth club
- Your GP

If they have concerns, they could talk to a local health worker who can advise them where else you may find help.

www.childrenandfamilyhealthdevon.nhs.uk

For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.