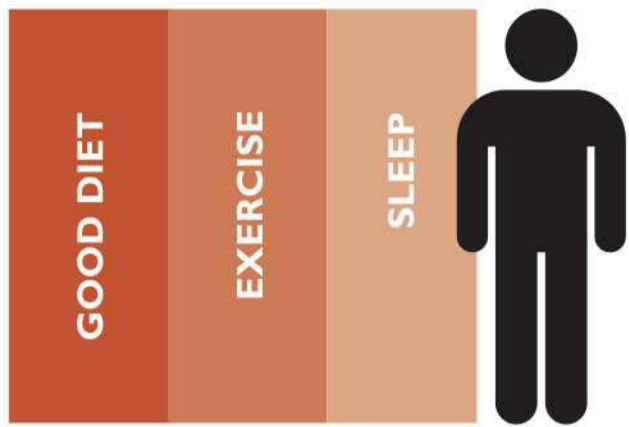


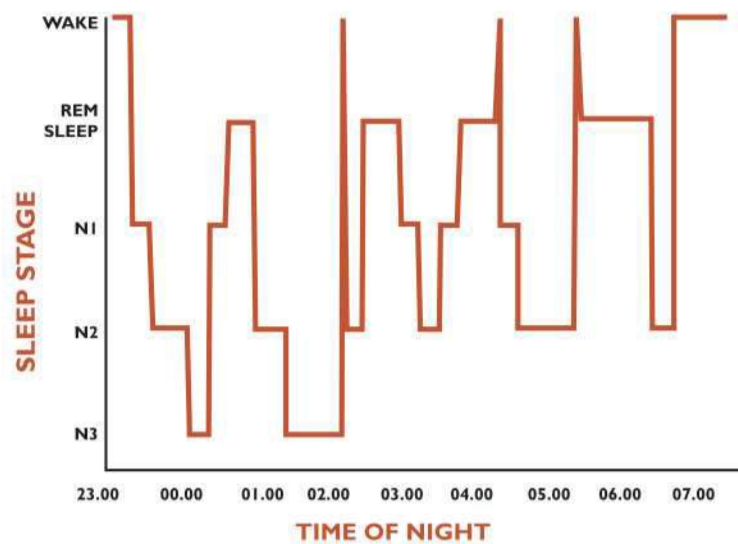
# WHY SLEEP IS IMPORTANT

## THREE PILLARS OF GOOD HEALTH



Good Sleep is needed to restore and refresh us, and to help consolidate memories and experiences.

## SLEEP CYCLES OVER THE COURSE OF THE NIGHT



Sleep is an active state and changes over the course of the night in a cyclical fashion.

Early in the night, we get more slow wave 'deep' sleep, while later in the night we experience more REM (Rapid Eye Movement Sleep) sleep and dreaming.

Scientists have found that REM sleep is important in consolidating things that we have learnt during the day.

## MANY DRUGS AFFECT SLEEP

**ALCOHOL** While many people may think that ALCOHOL helps you to get to sleep, it has detrimental effects on sleep quality and causes restless sleep in the second half of the night.

**CAFFEINE** (in coffee, tea, cola and energy drinks) is a stimulant. It is often used to maximise alertness during the day and works by blocking sleep-inducing chemicals in the brain. Caffeine consumed close to your normal bed time may disrupt your sleep.

**CANNABIS** affects both your quality of sleep and also suppresses REM sleep. This suppression effect reverses once cannabis is no longer in your system causing a rebound in REM sleep. The effects on sleep caused by cannabis may last for days post its last use.

**AMPHETAMINES** are stimulants which speed up the working activity of the brain. There are both legal (e.g. Ritalin) and illegal (e.g. speed, crystal methamphetamine). Each of these drugs affects a person's sleep quality and also the underlying sleep architecture.

**COMMONLY USED MEDICATIONS.** Some drugs such as benzodiazepines may be prescribed to help you fall asleep. These drugs may be useful in the short-term but their long term use is associated with side-effects including potential addiction and poor sleep quality.

### MOST AUSTRALIAN ADULTS DON'T GET ENOUGH SLEEP

Between the ages of 25 and 65 the average Australian gets around 7 hours of sleep on week nights.

### POOR SLEEP CAN BE DANGEROUS

Poor sleep is linked to an increased incidence of physical and mental health problems including heart disease, depression as well as increased risk of motor vehicle accidents and workplace injuries.

### SOME PEOPLE FIND THAT THEIR MIND IS TOO ACTIVE WHEN THEY TRY TO SLEEP

Different strategies may help in these situations.

1. **LIMIT YOUR INTAKE OF STIMULANTS** such as nicotine and caffeine close to bed time
2. Have a **'WIND DOWN' TIME** in the hour or so before bed. During this time **LIMIT USE** of computers or electronic devices that emit light.
3. Try to **LIMIT YOUR 'WORRIES'** at bed time by setting time earlier in the day to sort these out
4. When in bed, **FIND A RELAXING STRATEGY.** Some people find calming music, muscle relaxation and breathing exercises helpful.

### ABOUT 1/10 SUFFER FROM A SLEEP DISORDER

Most common being Obstructive sleep apnoea, insomnia and restless legs syndrome.

If you have troubles with your sleep professional help is available. Talk to your doctor, psychologist or health care professional about your troubles sleeping. Visit [www.sleep.org.au/](http://www.sleep.org.au/) and [www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au/](http://www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au/) for more information.