

NO SLEEP TONIGHT

Do you feel sluggish all the time?
Are the usual pick-me-ups not doing their magic?

Liyana Zamzuri finds out what may be
getting between you and a good night's sleep.

THE EXPERT



Dr Puvaneswary Kandiah, medical officer at Columbia Asia Hospital - Cheras

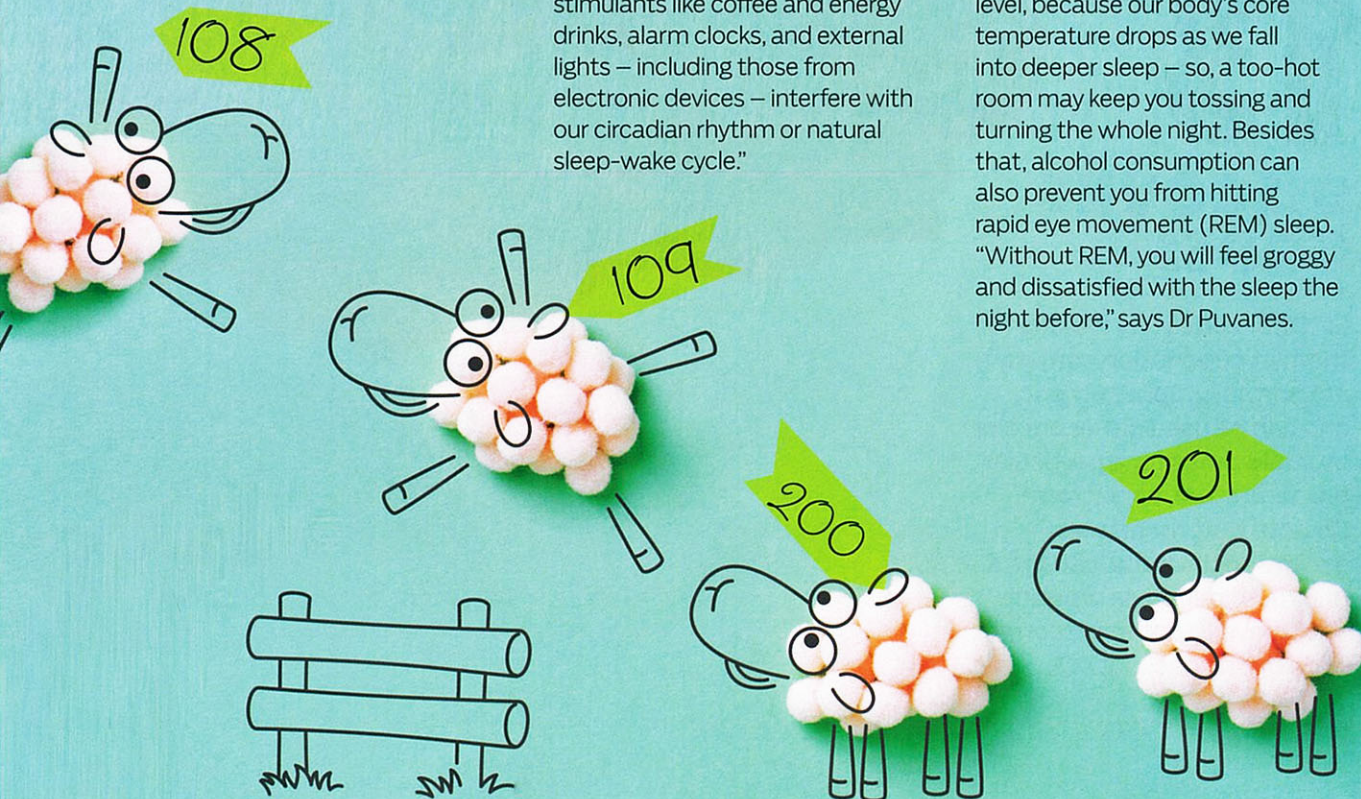
While sleep requirements vary slightly from person to person, most healthy adults need between six to eight hours of sleep per night to function at their best. Yet, few of us manage to clock up this many hours of shut-eye. As the National Sleep Foundation puts it, "Most of us know that getting a good night's sleep is important, but too few of us actually make those eight or so hours between the sheets a priority. We've forgotten what being really, truly rested feels like. To further complicate matters, stimulants like coffee and energy drinks, alarm clocks, and external lights – including those from electronic devices – interfere with our circadian rhythm or natural sleep-wake cycle."

The big question: WHY?

Dr Puvaneswary Kandiah, a medical officer at Columbia Asia Hospital - Cheras, reveals that nocturia, a condition in which people wake up to urinate more than once at night, could also be one of the reasons why you've been feeling lethargic. During sleep, our body shuts down for six to eight hours, and most of us can go this long without needing to get up to urinate – but not if you have nocturia. Urinary tract infections, a prolapsed bladder, diabetes, and kidney infections are common causes of nocturia.

"Nocturia is one of the primary causes of sleep disturbance and has been shown to impair quality of life, health and productivity, with those experiencing two or more voids per night reporting significant bother," explains Dr Puvanes.

Snoozing in a room that isn't the right temperature can also interrupt sleep patterns. Be sure to turn the temperature down to a cool and comfortable level, because our body's core temperature drops as we fall into deeper sleep – so, a too-hot room may keep you tossing and turning the whole night. Besides that, alcohol consumption can also prevent you from hitting rapid eye movement (REM) sleep. "Without REM, you will feel groggy and dissatisfied with the sleep the night before," says Dr Puvanes.



And, let's admit it: getting a good night's sleep is even more of a challenge now that we're surrounded by our gadgets. It's been reported that the average smartphone user checks her phone a whopping 110 times a day! Few of us know, however, that exposure to the artificial light emitting from our devices alters how melatonin (the hormone regulating sleep) works in our body. Dim lights signal the brain to start producing melatonin, while bright lights disrupt those signals and keep the brain stimulated and awake.

The science of anaemia

Trouble falling asleep may also be a warning to look after your health. Although insomnia is not a direct symptom of anaemia, Dr Puvanes shares that it's related. Anaemia is a medical condition whereby one's red blood cell (haemoglobin) count is lower than normal. Body cramps, restless leg syndrome, fatigue, and dizziness – caused by anaemia – can lead to interrupted sleep.

Anaemia has also been linked to poor cognitive performance, so if you are struggling to concentrate, it may have something to do with the lack of red blood cells in your system.

Normal levels of haemoglobin differ in men and women:

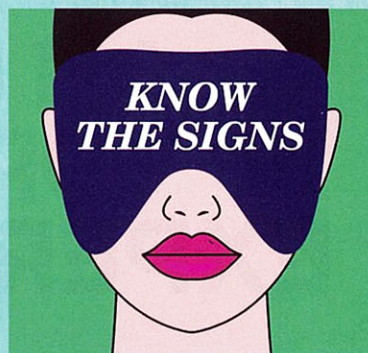
For men – a level more than 13.5g/100ml

For women – a level more than 12g/100ml

Look after yourself

HEALTHY SLEEP HABITS CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE IN YOUR QUALITY OF LIFE:

- *Try to go to sleep and get up at the same time*
- *Control the light level in your room. Your brain secretes more melatonin in darker rooms, so make sure yours is cool, dark and quiet.*
- *Limit daytime naps. They can interfere with night-time sleep.*
- *Fit physical activity into your daily routine. Regular exercise can help you sleep faster and better.*
- *Manage stress. When you have too much to do or think about, your sleep is likely to suffer. To restore peace, do things that calm you down and make you happy.*
- *Pay attention to what you eat and drink.*



IF YOU SUFFER FROM THESE SYMPTOMS, YOU MAY HAVE ANAEMIA:

- ✓ **Easily tired**
- ✓ **Pale complexion**
- ✓ **Shortness of breath**
- ✓ **Dizziness/headaches**
- ✓ **Rapid heartbeat**
- ✓ **Insomnia**
- ✓ **Difficulty concentrating**

What to do

You need to treat the underlying cause of anaemia first, because it can be hereditary or linked to pregnancy, as pregnant mothers are susceptible to iron deficiency anaemia because of increased blood supply during pregnancy. Vegetarians with a poor diet also have a higher chance of developing iron deficiency anaemia. In this case, eating certain food groups and taking iron supplements may help.

"Add red meat to your diet, as it is rich in iron, and don't forget leafy vegetables such as spinach and broccoli. You can also increase your vitamin C and foliate intake to boost your body's absorption of iron," adds Dr Puvanes.

As for nocturia, see a doctor to get diagnosed. Try to limit your fluid intake at least two hours before bedtime. Aside from that, reduce your intake of caffeine and alcohol, especially at night. **lu**

