Why following the 'How to sleep well' guidelines will help

By establishing a routine in the lead up to going to bed, you will be helping your body clock. During the day, getting outside will help the creation of melatonin (the hormone that helps you fall asleep) which is released as the light changes from day to night. Your brain recognises even the most subtle changes to light and the release of melatonin is a signal to the body to get ready to sleep. Exercise during the day will help you deal with stress and anxiety and will help your body burn up energy. If you are getting enough sleep you will not feel the need to nap. If you get into the habit of sleeping during the day, even for a short while, you may start to shift you circadian rhythm (your body clock). For the same reason, avoid having very late nights and long lies at the weekend. Staying up watching that very late film until 2:00am or 3:00am and then lying in bed until the afternoon the next day will really make Monday mornings hard to deal with. It creates the 'jet lag effect' whenever you do it.

If you have got things to do like homework, getting ready for the next day, a computer game to play or a favourite programme to watch on TV, try to get it done well before bedtime. During the evening, give your body plenty of time to digest a meal. A heavy supper late on or close to bedtime is hard for your stomach to deal with during sleep. The same applies to coffee or any drink that stimulates you. If you send your body signals that you are still busy when it is ready to sleep, you will find it hard to settle and relax when you want to.

The last hour is the most important hour of all. Your body is naturally getting ready to sleep with the release of melatonin, you are probably yawning, and your muscles are beginning to relax. Switch off the computer, the TV, the iPad, and don't use your mobile phone as the light that comes from their screens can interfere with the production of melatonin and stop you falling asleep. Have a bath (not a shower which may wake you up) and use that final hour to wind down. Once in bed, read a book or listen to gentle, relaxing music. Keep as close to a regular bedtime and waking up time as possible as it helps to 'set' your body clock.

If you can consistently go through as many of these stages as possible, you should soon find that you are waking in the morning feeling more refreshed.

Why not try keeping a 'Sleep Diary'? Note down when you went to bed each night, when you fell sleep and when you woke up. You can then work out how many hours sleep you got. Remember that the closer you can get to 9 hours and 15 minutes sleep each night, the better you will feel every day!