

## Relaxation Exercises for Falling Asleep

If you have trouble falling asleep, relaxation techniques can help you quiet your mind and calm your body. Try one of these simple exercises when you're in bed.

### **Breathing exercise**

Close your eyes and notice your breathing. Turn all your attention to your natural breathing pattern and feel the air enter and leave your nose or mouth. Visualize the flow of air as it passes through your mouth, airways, down into your belly, and back out again. Survey your body for any tension, and as you exhale, feel the tension leave that part of your body. Visualize your breath reaching your forehead, your neck, your shoulders, your arms... and then releasing the tension as you exhale. If your mind wanders to another worry or thought, let it go and gently redirect your attention back to your breath.

### **Guided imagery**

The idea in this exercise is to focus your attention on an image or story, so that your mind can let go of worries or thoughts that keep you awake.

Get into a comfortable position in bed. Close your eyes and relax. Begin to visualize a scene, memory, or story that you find calming. This is highly individual—find what works best for you by trying a few choices. For example: a favorite vacation or calming outdoor spot, a relaxing activity like curling up with a book in your favorite chair, or something repetitive like remembering the steps of an exercise or dance routine. The key is to find something that allows you to focus your attention and let go of other thoughts. Begin to create this scenario in your mind. Visualize all the details of the image or story, as slowly and carefully as you can. Any time you find your mind drifting to an unrelated thought (a worry about the day or a “must do” for tomorrow), acknowledge it and let it go. Turn your mind's eye back to your relaxing story. It's okay if this takes time before it works, each time you practice you will get better at it.

Remember to follow these additional tips if you have difficulty sleeping:

- Turn off electronics and rotate your clock away from you (don't watch the clock or check your phone if you can't sleep). Try not to worry if you can't fall asleep, and remind yourself that your body will eventually take over and help you sleep.

If you are awake for more than 20 minutes in bed, move to a different part of the house (one without bright lights). Do something relaxing for a while, until you begin to feel tired and come back to bed.