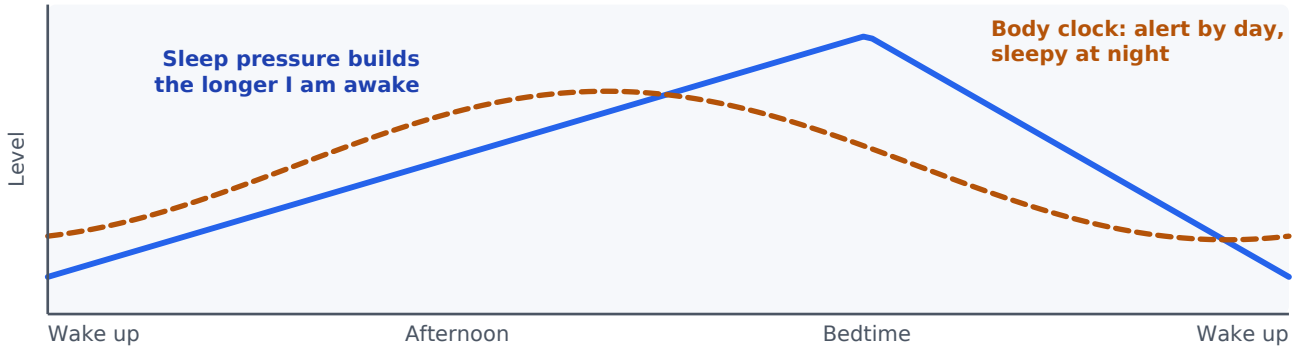
How sleep works

How sleep pressure and the body clock control when you sleep.

You cannot make yourself sleep. Sleep happens when two systems in the body line up.



Sleep pressure
Builds from the moment you wake. The longer you are up and the more active you are, the stronger it gets. Sleep empties it again. Naps, lie-ins and early nights all reduce it.

The body clock
A roughly 24-hour rhythm that makes you alert by day and sleepy at night. It is set mainly by light, especially morning daylight, and by regular times for getting up.

You fall asleep easily when sleep pressure is high and the body clock says "night". Trouble starts when the two get out of step.

Useful facts

- **Sleep comes in cycles** of about 90 minutes, moving through lighter sleep, deep sleep and dreaming sleep.
- **Waking in the night is normal.** Most people wake briefly several times and do not remember it.
- **Need varies.** Most adults need somewhere between seven and nine hours. Some need less. How you function in the day is a better guide than the number.
- **You can cope with a bad night.** The body makes up for lost sleep mainly by sleeping more deeply the next night. It does not need the same hours back.
- **You cannot force it.** Trying hard to sleep wakes you up. Sleep comes more easily when you stop trying.

The three things that matter most

1. Get up at the same time every day.
2. Get daylight in the morning.
3. Stay out of bed until you are sleepy.

Note
Your body already knows how to sleep. Most of the work is removing the things that get in its way.

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