

AUDIOSCRIPT 1- LECTURE

OK. Turning to the stages of sleep, we can identify five stages in a night's sleep, as you can see on the slide. In different stages of sleep, our brains put together thoughts and experiences, then store them in an organised way, giving us clearer memories. According to Robert Stickgold, a sleep researcher at Harvard Medical School in Boston, it seems that different kinds of sleep improve different kinds of memories, and this might be why we have the five stages of sleep. Recent experiments suggest that the final stage of sleep, REM sleep, is very important for organising our memories and helps to improve our learning. NREM sleep is important for making our memories stronger. Experiments have also shown that the brain works in a different way after we've had a good night's sleep.

The final area I want to talk about are things that can stop us sleeping well. One of them is too much light. Street lights and security lights mean that even when we're asleep, it's never completely dark. And the evidence suggests that the quantity and quality of darkness in our lives affects our health. Another problem is the 24/7 world, with the Internet, 24-hour shopping, global travel etc. Because of this, our days are becoming longer and the nights shorter- and this could also damage our health, as we're not getting enough sleep.

To sum up, I hope I've succeeded in showing you that sleep is a very important and interesting subject. We sleep less as we get older, but everybody's different- some people need more sleep, others less. There are two types of sleep- NREM and REM; most sleep is NREM, but REM is when dreaming happens. During the five stages of sleep, our brains organise our memories and make them stronger. But too much light and our modern way of life can have a negative impact on our sleep patterns and, as a result, on our brains and our health. Thank you for listening. Are there any questions? Is anyone still awake?