Welcome to Spotlight. I’m Colin Lowther. And I’m Liz Waid. Spotlight uses a special English method of broadcasting. It is easier for people to understand, no matter where in the world they live. A man and a woman are in bed. The man is sleeping. He went to sleep as soon as he got into bed. He snores loudly. He has no difficulty falling asleep. And he always sleeps well all night. The woman lies next to him. But she is not sleeping. She feels tired but she cannot sleep. She lies on her back. She turns and lies on her side. Then she turns to her other side. Still she cannot sleep. And still he sleeps - and snores! He always sleeps well at night. And she always finds it difficult to go to sleep. Many people experience problems with sleep. Some people find it difficult to go to sleep. Some find that they are often awake in the middle of the night. Some people even take medicine to make them go to sleep. Sleep is important for everyone. And better sleep improves people’s minds and bodies. Today’s Spotlight is on a good night’s sleep. All humans have a basic need to sleep. And we normally sleep at night. Our bodies have a kind of clock in them that is linked to daylight. When it gets dark, our bodies prepare for sleep. And scientists have discovered that our bodies change during sleep. Our heart rate and body temperature both drop. Our brain waves change too. We experience about five different cycles or periods of sleep each night. Each cycle lasts about an hour and a half. In each sleep cycle we experience different sorts of sleep. Non REM and REM are the main sorts of sleep. REM stands for Rapid Eye Movement. In non REM sleep our eyes do not move much. But in REM sleep our eyes move quickly. We also dream most during REM sleep. But how much sleep do people need? An average adult needs about seven or eight hours of sleep every night. But everyone is a little different. Some people need more sleep. Some people need less. Scientists have discovered that our genes can affect how much we need to sleep. About ten percent of people need nine or ten hours of sleep. Other people are fine with three to six hours of sleep. If people do not get enough sleep they can suffer both physically and mentally. They may feel tired and angry or annoyed. They cannot remember things or solve problems as easily. They can make mistakes in their work. Sleep is also important for a person’s health. Lack of sleep can make people sick, and increase the risk of heart disease or stroke. In extreme cases people, can even die because of a total lack of sleep. Different cultures have different sleep traditions. In some cultures it is normal to sleep alone or with a husband or wife. But in other cultures people sleep with their family or even in big social or community groups. In Spain, people have a tradition of a siesta or short sleep in the afternoon. People in Egypt also have an afternoon sleep called Ta’assila. Some tribes in Botswana and Zaire sleep when they feel like it - at any time of the day or night. People who live in Japan sleep less at night than people in many other countries. But the Japanese have developed a tradition of sleeping at work. They take very short sleeps or naps called inemuri. History can also teach us about sleep traditions. Roger Ekirch is an historian at Virginia Tech in the United States. He researched how people slept in the past. He examined hundreds of old documents. And he discovered that people used to sleep in a different way from most people today. In the past, people slept in two separate periods during the night. They called the two periods of sleep ‘first sleep’ and ‘second sleep’. Between these two sleeps they were awake for one or two hours. Ekirch believes that this way of sleeping started to change when people began using street lights and lights in homes. Lights caused people to stay up late. They no longer had time for two sleeps. People forgot about ‘first sleep’ and ‘second sleep’. But some people still have a period of being awake in the middle of the night. They can think that they have a sleep problem. But experts like Ekirch think that this may just be a natural way to sleep. Ekirch told the Huffington post, ‘People who suffer from middle of the night sleeplessness should understand something. Seen from history, their sleep may well be completely normal.’ So it may be frustrating, but if you wake in the night you may not have a sleep problem! You may just sleep more like your ancestors. There are many other common sleep problems. Experts say that there are many reasons for poor sleep. But they also advise how to create good conditions for sleep. They say you should make sure that the place where you are sleeping is dark. Melatonin is a chemical produced by the body. This chemical helps control sleep. Melatonin reacts with light. That is why people find it much harder to go to sleep in a light room. The blue light from modern technology is a particular problem. Professor Charles Czeisler of Harvard told the BBC, ‘Light most powerfully influences your body clock. Being near light, especially short wave length blue-ish light at night, will reset our body clock to a later hour. This will delay the release of the sleep encouraging chemical melatonin. This will make it more difficult for us to get up in the morning.’ Experts also say you should make sure that where you sleep is not too hot or cold. Your body has a natural drop in temperature when you go to sleep. So if you move from a warm room to a cool room to sleep you will help that natural process. You should prepare for bedtime and create a calm atmosphere. With a good night’s sleep you can have a good day! Do you sleep well at night? Or do you have sleep problems? What do you do to help you get a good night’s sleep? Tell us about it. You can leave a comment on our website. Or email us at radio@radioenglish.net. You can also comment on Facebook at Facebook.com/spotlightradio. The writer of this programme was Katy Blake. The producer was Bruce Gulland. The voices you heard were from the United Kingdom and the United States. All quotes were adapted for this programme and voiced by Spotlight. You can listen to this programme again, and read it, on the internet at www.radioenglish.net. This programme is called ‘A Good Night’s Sleep.’ Look for our free listening app in the Google Play Store and in iTunes. We hope you can join us again for the next Spotlight programme. Goodbye.