

## Sleep Hygiene

Sleep is an essential part of feeling well and feeling happy, but almost everyone experiences problems sleeping at some time of their life. People with long-term pain are more likely to have problems with sleep.

Lack of sleep robs you of needed rest, making management of your illness more difficult. Bringing sleep patterns under control is important - you need your rest. However, it often takes some time (several weeks) to get problematic sleep under control.

Sleep problems are often known as 'insomnia'. *Sleep onset insomnia* is trouble **falling** asleep. *Sleep maintenance insomnia* is trouble **staying** asleep, especially in the second half of the night.

Often, an important factor in sleep onset insomnia is having a lot on your mind, so focusing on relaxation and learning how to manage thoughts and feelings can help.

### **\*Sleep Fact: Sleep maintenance insomnia & Bi-Phasic Sleep\***

There is good evidence that a more natural sleep pattern (and one our pre-electricity ancestors had) was 'bi-phasic' (i.e. the night time sleep was not being one long period of sleep, but was split into two, with an hour or so of night-time wakefulness between them). One theory is that when we try to suppress the normal mid-night waking period, it may lead to fragmented sleep through a longer section of the night. In other words, for some people, sleep maintenance insomnia may not be a 'true' insomnia, but be their body's attempt to sleep in a bi-phasic pattern.

For both types of insomnia, paying attention to good 'sleep hygiene' is a first step you can take towards establishing good sleep.

### **Do:**

- Go to bed at the same time each day
- Get up from bed at the same time each day
- Get regular exercise each day, preferably in the morning (there is good evidence regular exercise improves restful sleep)
- Get regular exposure to outdoor or bright lights, especially in the late afternoon
- Keep the temperature in your bedroom comfortable
- Keep the bedroom dark enough to facilitate sleep

- Keep the bedroom quiet – try thicker curtains, sleeping at the back of your house or even ear plugs to avoid being woken by noise
- Use your bed only for sleep and sex
- Use a relaxation exercise just before going to sleep or a relaxation tape
- Try muscle relaxation to help distress and unwind, e.g. a warm bath or a massage
- Keep your feet and hands warm. Wear warm socks and/or mittens or gloves to bed
- If you lie in bed awake for more than 15 minutes, get up, go to a different room (or different part of the bedroom), participate in a quiet activity (e.g. non-excitabile reading or television), then return to bed when you feel sleepy. Do this as many times during the night as needed

### **Don't:**

- Exercise just before going to bed
- Engage in stimulating activity just before bed, such as playing computer games, watching an exciting program on television or movie, or having an important discussion with a loved one
- Have caffeine in the evening (coffee, teas, chocolate, etc.)
- Have alcohol in the evening or use alcohol to sleep (it may make you drowsy but it doesn't improve sleep and you will wake to go to the toilet)
- Smoke before going to bed – nicotine is a stimulant and will keep you awake
- Read or watch television in bed
- Go to bed too hungry or too full
- Take another person's sleeping pills
- Never take daytime naps or doze off in front of the TV in the evening – keep yourself awake with something stimulating or your risk resetting your body clock
- Command yourself to go to sleep. This only makes your mind and body more alert