

Sleep Hygiene for People with Multiple Sclerosis

Sleep hygiene means sleeping well

If you have difficulty getting to sleep or staying asleep this leaflet is for you.

Why is sleep important?

Sleep is important as poor sleep can impact on daily life, causing daytime sleepiness, decreased concentration and memory, an inability to work effectively and make other Multiple Sclerosis (MS) symptoms worse. The right amount of sleep to feel refreshed is individual to you but generally most people need between six to eight hours a day.

What can I do to help me sleep better?

- ✓ Establish a good bedtime routine. Keep regular times for going to bed and getting up.
- ✓ Make your bedroom sleep friendly. It should be cool, quiet and dark. Earplugs and a sleep mask can be helpful. Make sure your mattress and pillow are comfortable.
- ✓ Take a warm bath before bed, perhaps with lavender oil to help you relax.
- ✓ Have a warm milky drink or light snack before bed to help you sleep through the night without waking up hungry.
- ✓ Read or listen to gentle music before going to sleep.
- ✓ Try gentle stretching exercises or relaxation techniques.
- ✓ Try aromatherapy or gentle massage before bed.
- ✓ Try to stay as physically active as possible during the day as this can help you sleep more easily.
- ✓ Try to have some daily exposure to sunlight.

What should I not do?

- ❖ Don't have a large meal just before bed as it may keep you awake.
- ❖ Reduce drinks containing caffeine (tea, coffee, cola, hot chocolate) and avoid them for four hours before bed.
- ❖ Avoid smoking as it can disrupt sleep.
- ❖ Avoid looking at bright screens such as your laptop or phone just before bed.
- ❖ If you have bladder problems, reduce the amount of fluid you drink two hours before going to bed to lessen the need to go to the toilet in the night.
- ❖ Avoid increased napping during the day due to fatigue.
- ❖ Don't stay in bed if you have not fallen asleep after 30 minutes. Get up and do something relaxing like reading or listening to relaxing music. Forcing yourself to lie in bed trying to sleep will frustrate you and keep you awake longer.

Can medication affect sleep?

Some medications used for people with MS can affect sleep. Steroids used to treat a relapse can disrupt sleep so you will normally be advised to take them in the morning. Some medications used to treat Multiple Sclerosis symptoms can cause sleepiness so can be helpful.

What should I do if my Multiple Sclerosis symptoms are disturbing my sleep?

If your MS symptoms such as bladder, pain, mood or spasms are keeping you awake or waking you up, speak to your MS team or GP.

Useful sources of information

The MS Trust website has information on sleep problems and MS. <https://www.mstrust.org.uk/life-ms/wellbeing/sleep>

The NHS website has a section on sleep problems.

www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness/how-to-get-to-sleep/

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your sleep, please contact the MS Nursing Team: 020 8725 2104.

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health. **Web:** www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

