



Patient & Family Guide
2020

Pain and Sleep

Pain Self-Management Program



www.nshealth.ca

Pain and Sleep

People who have pain often have trouble sleeping. If you are struggling with sleep, you are not alone. You may have trouble sleeping because of your sleep habits. Habits can be hard to change. Sometimes:

- Being in pain can make it more challenging to get a good sleep.
- Certain pain medications can disturb your natural sleep cycle.
- The stress of chronic (ongoing) pain can affect your sleep.

Better sleep helps you to:

- › manage your pain levels.
- › improve your mood.
- › lower stress.

Many people with chronic pain experience:

- › having a hard time falling asleep.
- › waking up a lot at night.
- › not being able to get back to sleep once awake.
- › sleeping for a longer or shorter amount of time.
- › taking more naps during the day.
- › waking up and going to sleep at a different time each day.

How much sleep do I need?

You may have heard that adults need 8 hours of sleep a night. This is not true. Some people may sleep for more than 8 hours, and some may sleep for less. The amount of sleep you get affects your mood and pain levels. It may take some time to figure out how much sleep you need.

If I feel sleepy during the day, should I nap?

A short nap of 20 to 30 minutes in the early afternoon can help. If you nap for a long time or too close to bedtime, it may affect your nighttime sleep. Set an alarm to help you wake up from a nap.

What is insomnia?

Insomnia is a disorder in which you have trouble sleeping. You may have trouble falling asleep, not be able to get back to sleep after being awake, or wake up too early in the morning. Your health care provider can tell if you have insomnia based on how long you have had trouble sleeping.

Insomnia is diagnosed as poor sleep for 3 or more nights per week, for at least 3 months, that affects your day-to-day ability to function.

It is common to have trouble sleeping every once in a while. No one sleeps perfectly all of the time.

Could my medication be affecting my sleep?

Medication has side effects that may change your sleep. Some medications can make you feel awake at night, or tired in the morning and during the day.

Talk with your health care provider or pharmacist to find out if your medication may change your sleep. They may recommend you change your medication dosage (amount) or when you take it so you can sleep better. **Do not make these changes without talking to your health care provider and pharmacist first.**

I used to sleep deeply. Why does my pain wake me up now?

Before you had trouble sleeping, you probably do not remember waking up during the night, but you did. This is because we go through 4 to 5 sleep cycles each night, waking up briefly each time. When you have pain, you may become aware of it and focus on it each time you wake. This can make it hard to fall back asleep.

It is not your pain that is waking you up. You wake up as a natural part of the sleep cycle. Then when you are awake, you become aware of your pain. Your awareness of your pain may make it hard to fall back asleep.

Relaxation activities like deep breathing or imagery may help you get back to sleep. Adjusting your position to get more comfortable may also help.

Notice your thoughts when you wake. Try to change any unhelpful thoughts you may have about sleep (see Self-talk on page 14).

I fall asleep very late at night. I have tried to get to sleep earlier, but I cannot sleep. How do I get back to a healthy routine?

You may be able to break this habit if you:

- › go to sleep at the same time every night.
- › relax in the evening.
- › try to wake up at the same time every morning.
- › be more active earlier in the day.

Before bed, your body sends signals that it is getting ready for sleep. A good bedtime routine starts when these signals start (e.g., you start to yawn, your eyes feel heavy, you feel drowsy, and your body temperature drops). If you wait to go to sleep too long after these signals start, it may take longer for you to fall asleep. You should be able to fall asleep in 20 to 30 minutes after these signals start.

If you can't get to sleep in 20 to 30 minutes, pick a regular bedtime and stick to it. If you follow your routine, you will start to fall asleep around your bedtime. To help you wake up, set an alarm, turn on the lights, and spend time outside.

Understanding how sleep works

What is a sleep cycle?

A sleep cycle lasts about 90 minutes. During each cycle, you move through 5 stages of sleep. The first 4 stages are non-rapid eye movement (NREM) sleep. The fifth stage is rapid eye movement (REM) sleep.

What are the sleep stages?

Sleep happens in stages. All of the stages are important. You start in **light sleep**, move into **deep sleep**, then move back to **light sleep**. After the second light sleep, you go into **REM sleep**. After REM sleep, it is common to wake up for a moment. This is **not** a sign that you are sleeping poorly. It is part of the natural sleep cycle. After the first cycle is over, you move into the next cycle. You go through the cycle 4 to 5 times during the night.

- **Light sleep** helps move your body and brain into deep sleep.
 - › You spend just over half of the night in light sleep.
 - › Your breathing is regular and your heart rate slows down.
 - › You are aware of sounds and can direct your thoughts. This makes it easy to think you are awake!
- **Deep sleep** is needed for good health, tissue repair, and fighting disease.
 - › You spend about one quarter (1/4) of the night in deep sleep.
 - › It is very hard to wake someone up during deep sleep.
 - › You dream, but the dreams are less detailed than in REM sleep.
- **REM sleep** is important for your mood and memory.
 - › Just under one quarter (1/4) of the night is spent in REM sleep.
 - › Your heart rate increases. Your muscles relax and your body does not move.
 - › Your brain is active, and vivid dreams are common.

Chemical messengers and sleep

Chemicals in the body control many functions, such as growth, energy, and sleep.

Adrenaline makes you feel alert and ready for action. This is why exercise before bedtime is not recommended. It is best to do relaxing things, like reading or meditating, before bedtime. This helps your body and brain feel calm and ready for sleep.

Melatonin tells your body that it is time for sleep. Your body releases melatonin when it is dark outside. This is why it is important to turn off electronics and use dim light in the evening, so that your body knows it's bedtime.

Adenosine increases during the day when you are awake, and makes you feel tired in the evening.

It is important to create good conditions for your body to release the chemicals it needs for sleep. This will help you sleep better.

Sleep is controlled by:	Problems can happen when:
<p>Body clock (circadian system)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your body clock decides the best time for you to sleep. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You change your sleep/wake schedule from day to day. You do not get enough light in the morning and dark in the evening to help reset your body clock.
<p>Deep sleep driver system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This system builds over 24 hours by being awake and active. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your deep sleep drive doesn't build up enough (from too little activity or too much time sleeping).
<p>Arousal system (fight-flight-freeze system)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This system overrides sleep during emergencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your system is overactive (from pain, medication, anxiety, worrying about sleep, fatigue, stress).

How can I help my sleep?

Body clock: Help keep your internal clock well set.

- Keep the same wake time and bedtime every day, even on weekends.
- Get outside in daylight every day.
- Set a shut-off time for your electronics (such as cell phone, TV, tablets).

Deep sleep driver system: Help increase your deep sleep driver system.

- Limit your time in bed. Rest somewhere else or rest in ways that you are less likely to fall asleep.
- Use your bed for sleeping and sex only.
- Get up and do things during the day.

Arousal system: Help decrease your arousal system.

- Start to relax and wind down one hour before bed.
- Try a meaningful relaxation practice (like meditation, yoga, art therapy, imagery, deep breathing).
- Try not to put pressure on yourself to fall asleep. Be kind to yourself.

Remember:

It takes patience to develop good sleep habits. It is best to make small changes and build new habits slowly over time. It may take 2 to 3 weeks to see changes in your sleep quality.

Try creating your own sleep plan below. Set a regular wake-up time and bedtime, and do your best to stick to this routine. See “NAPPERS: Planning Good Sleep Habits” on the next page for tips on developing good sleep habits.

My sleep plan

1. Wake up and get out of bed at _____ every day.
2. Go to bed when I am sleepy, but not before _____.
3. Get up and get out of bed when I cannot sleep during the night. Go back to bed when I am sleepy.
4. Use the bed only for sleeping and sex. Do not read, rest, eat, use my cellphone, or watch TV, etc. in bed.
5. Do not nap for more than 20 to 30 minutes during the day. (Rest in ways that I am not likely to fall asleep.)

NAPPERS: Planning good sleep habits

N	Nutrition	Think about what you eat and drink. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• You need regular meals and the right foods to stay healthy and sleep well.• Eating large, spicy, or fatty meals close to bedtime can make it hard to sleep.• Alcohol, caffeine, cannabis, nicotine, vaping, and some medications can affect your sleep.
A	Atmosphere	Think about the feeling in your bedroom. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The following things can keep your mind alert and make it hard to fall asleep: noise, temperature, air-flow, light, snoring, pets, clutter, office materials, workout gear, and electronics such as a TV, laptop, cell phone, or tablet.

P	Pain control pills	<p>Think about your medication(s) and when you take it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain medication can affect your sleep. Talk with your health care provider or pharmacist about the best time to take your medication.
P	Position	<p>Think about your comfort.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure your mattress and pillow support your body. Chose a sleep position that puts less strain on your body.
E	Exercise Enjoyment	<p>Think about fun and fitness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercising early in the day can make it easier to sleep at night. Exercising close to bedtime can make it harder to fall asleep. • Doing fun activities before bedtime can help to relax your mind so that you do not focus on your pain and worries.

R	Relaxation Routine	Think about your bedtime and morning routines. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relaxing your body and mind before bedtime can make it easier to fall asleep. If you are overtired or stressed, you may not be relaxed enough to fall asleep.• Having a regular bedtime routine and going to bed at the same time every night tells your body when it is time to go to sleep.
S	Self-talk	Think about your self-talk. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Worrying and thinking about what you have to do the next day, or your pain, can keep your mind alert and make it hard to fall asleep. Doing relaxing activities in the evening can help to quiet your mind.

Resources

Books

- Goodnight Mind: Turn Off Your Noisy Thoughts & Get a Good Night's Sleep
 - › Colleen E. Carney and Rachel Manber
- Sink into Sleep: A Step-by-Step Workbook for Reversing Insomnia
 - › Judith R. Davidson
- Quiet Your Mind & Get to Sleep: Solutions to Insomnia for Those with Depression, Anxiety, or Chronic Pain
 - › Colleen E. Carney and Rachel Manber
- End the Insomnia Struggle: A Step-by-Step Guide to Help You Get to Sleep and Stay Asleep
 - › Colleen Ehrnstrom and Alisha L. Brosse

Free programs

Building Better Sleep

- Community Health Team
 - › Phone: 902-460-4560

Apps

(Available on Apple or Android)

CBT-i Coach

- › Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for insomnia

Breathe2Relax

- › Stress management tool

Calm

- › Meditation for sleep and stress reduction

Headspace

- › Mindfulness and meditation

Insight Timer

- › Guided meditations and timer

Websites

Sleepwell

- › www.mysleepwell.ca

Canadian Sleep Society

- › <https://css-scs.ca>

Sleep.org

- › www.sleep.org

National Sleep Foundation

- › www.sleepfoundation.org

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Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here: <http://library.nshealth.ca/PatientGuides>

Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.

For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time: call 811 or visit <https://811.novascotia.ca>

Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.