



Somerset Community Pain
Management Service

**Working together
on my health**

Sleep and Pain

Sleep problems are common. They can start for all sorts of reasons - stress, shift work, a new baby or health or pain problems. But there are ways that you can improve your sleep pattern.

Getting a good night's sleep can make you feel so much better. But if you're in pain, it can be difficult to drift off. This is a problem, as a healthy sleep pattern can help you to deal with and manage long-term pain much more effectively. So, the less you sleep, the worse the pain gets, and the less you're able to sleep in the future.

Thankfully, there are solutions to this. This factsheet is designed to help you come up with your own solutions to problems with sleep. If you want more information, then go to the 'Get More Information' section of the patient online platform, if you're registered with the pain service. This website is accessible at <http://somersetpain.co.uk>. If you're not registered, there is more information at the same website under the 'Get information/resources' section.

The Bedroom and Sleep

For people who sleep well, the bed and bedroom act as a signal to feel sleepy and to fall asleep quickly. For people who have problems sleeping, the bed and bedroom may have become a signal for other activities such as watching TV, lying awake, worrying or feeling frustrated about not sleeping.

- ✓ Learn to associate the bedroom only with sleep and sex.
- ✓ Do not use the bedroom for work related tasks or leisure activities such as watching TV.
- ✓ You spend a large part of your time in bed. So make sure that your bed is as comfortable as it can be. Check that the mattress is OK and that the pillows are right for you
- ✓ Make sure that the bedroom is a comfortable temperature, slightly cooler is better than too warm.
- ✓ Your bedroom should be peaceful, if you cannot get rid of outside noise, consider using earplugs.

Buying a bed

You need to be as comfortable as possible in your bedroom. If your bed is uncomfortable, or old, or too small, this might make it harder for you to get to sleep. Consider the points below to determine whether or not you should consider buying a new bed:

- Do you and your partner roll towards each other unintentionally?
- Is your bed too small to give an undisturbed night's sleep?

Do not rush into buying a bed. Do you need to replace the complete bed or only the mattress? If you are only buying a mattress do make sure that you test it on an equivalent base to your own whilst in the show room.

Worry and Sleep

Worry can get in the way of sleep. It is common to worry about not being able to sleep, which in itself can make the problem worse. It is also common to lie awake at night worrying about particular problems, and they often seem worse at night. This is not helpful.

- ✓ Try to set aside a time to deal with worries earlier in the day
- ✓ Write down the problem and what you are planning to do about it
- ✓ If worries still bother you during the night, it can be helpful to jot them down on a piece of paper at the side of the bed and then “disown” them until tomorrow when you can consider them more clearly

Remember, the bedroom is for sleep and sex only.

The Bedtime Routine

Many of the things that people do in the few hours before they go to bed can interfere with a good night’s sleep. If you are having trouble with sleep, the following can help:

- ✓ If after 20 minutes in bed you cannot get to sleep, or you have woken in the night and cannot get back to sleep, **get up**.
- ✓ Go into another room and do something else that is quiet.
- ✓ Go back to bed only when you feel sleepy.

Initially it may feel as if you are spending more time getting up than asleep. However, you are doing this so that your brain learns to associate the bedroom with sleep and not with tossing and turning and getting frustrated. In the long term this technique should help you establish a better sleep pattern.

The Bedtime Routine continued...



Establish a sleep routine. Get up at the same time every morning and go to bed at the same time every evening. This helps to keep your body clock regular. Do this regardless of how much sleep you have had.



Alcohol, caffeine and nicotine are all stimulants and can disrupt your sleep. Cut out smoking in the evening and if possible consider stopping. Avoid tea, coffee, excessive alcohol and drinks which contain caffeine and chocolate.



Have a 'wind down' time the hour before going to bed rather than rushing about.



Avoid eating large meals up to 3 hours before bedtime. Digestion raises the body temperature, which is not conducive to sleep.



A warm bath before bed can be helpful as it helps you to relax and to get your body at a good temperature for sleep.



Use your relaxation skills (see [Relaxation](#) section).



Vigorous physical activity (apart from sex) just before going to bed is not helpful as it raises the body temperature too much. So carry out your exercises earlier in the day.



Do you find taking medication for pain before going to bed helpful? If so, do this at the same time every night and not according to your pain levels that day.

Daytime Naps

Sleeping during the day is not generally helpful when you have a sleep problem as it can affect your sleep pattern. However if pain wakes you frequently a shorter, better quality sleep at night may be helpful. If it suits your routine you can supplement this with a short daytime nap. If you do, this nap should be no longer than 20 minutes and taken no later than early afternoon otherwise it will affect your ability to sleep at night.

Sleep Diary

It may be helpful to keep a record of your sleep for a while. This will help you identify any problem areas and also to notice any improvements.

Use this diary to monitor your sleep over the next few weeks. You may not know exactly what time you fell asleep or how long you were awake. Do not worry about this – it is just a rough guide to help you to monitor your progress.

Day	Napped from: To:	Went to bed at:	Fell asleep at:	Woke ... times in the night	Stayed awake for ... minutes	Got up at:	Overall my sleep was (circle one)				
							Restful	Very restless			
E.g. Mon	1-3 pm	11pm	1pm	3	30	9am	1	2	3	4	5

Patients' Experience

"I make sure I have the right amount of sleep – too much time lying down is counterproductive and too little sleep leaves me frazzled. I have stopped watching TV in bed. I read something about how TV is not a relaxing activity. I gave it a try and listened to the radio, read a book and also did some of the relaxation techniques."