

#weareNHFT

# SLEEP WELL WITH PAIN

ADVICE LEAFLET

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 [nhft.nhs.uk/physiotherapy](https://nhft.nhs.uk/physiotherapy)



**MAKING A  
DIFFERENCE  
FOR YOU,  
WITH YOU**

Sleep helps you to recharge—both physically and mentally. While you sleep your body is busy doing important jobs to ensure you wake up refreshed and healthy. Your brain is cleaning itself of waste products and consolidating memories. Your muscles, bones, and organs are repairing themselves. Sleep also helps keep your immune system healthy.

So it's important you get a good night's sleep – both in quality and quantity.

## HOW MUCH SLEEP REQUIRED?

The amount of sleep you need varies depending on your age. The average amount of sleep required for most adults is between 7–9 hours. However some people require more sleep and some require less. Don't become anxious that you're not getting enough sleep purely on the misperception that you need to get the 'magic' 7-9 hours.

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN PAIN INTERFERES WITH SLEEP?

Many people who experience pain report sleep problems. It's likely that there are a number of causes of your sleep difficulties. On the opposite page you will find six triggers often found by people living with pain.

# WHY CAN'T I SLEEP?



Your **MEDICATION** makes you drowsy in the day so you sleep at irregular times

You **WORRY** about how your lack of sleep will affect you the next day

You **NOTICE** your pain more as there are no other distractions at night

You are experiencing **MOOD CHANGES** that create tension in your body

You are **NOT COMFORTABLE** in your bed or you are **DISTURBED** by sounds / light

You are not in a **REGULAR ROUTINE** so your mind and body are confused about when it is time to rest

The good news is there are many things you can do to manage pain symptoms and improve your sleep:

**Discuss about your pain and sleep problem with your doctor:**

- Is your condition being adequately managed?
- Is there something more you can be doing to ease the pain you're experiencing?
- Managing your condition and your pain levels will help you get a better night's sleep.

## SLEEP HYGIENE

**Try not to put too much pressure on yourself to go to sleep.**

This leads to anxiety and stress if you don't fall asleep quickly. Feeling anxious or stressed will impact on your ability to sleep.

**Develop a sleep routine.** Try to go to bed and get up at the same time each day. This will help your body clock regulate production of the hormones needed to go to sleep (melatonin) or stay awake (serotonin).

**Get out of bed if you're unable to sleep.** Don't stay in bed tossing and turning. Have a warm drink (e.g. milk, no caffeine), do some gentle stretches or slow deep breathing exercises.

**Be active during the day as possible as you can be** and eat well (your body works best when you eat a wide range of healthy foods. A balanced diet and an adequate fluid intake can help provide you with better energy levels, help to maintain your weight, and give you a greater sense of wellbeing which may improve your symptoms.



**Avoid caffeine and alcohol** for several hours before going to bed. They can affect your ability to fall asleep and the quality of your sleep.

**Consider your bedding:** Your bedding can make a big impact on the quality of your sleep and your comfort:

- Is your mattress or pillow affecting your sleep?
- Are they too hard, too soft, not providing enough support?
- Is your linen comfortable, clean and keeping you adequately warm or cool (depending on the season)?

**Exercise:** Even low levels of exercise are beneficial to sleep.

**A warm shower** in the evening is helpful as it will increase the body surface temperature initially, followed by cooling of the core body temperature.

**Only have a nap during the day as a one off**, for a special reason (not routinely).

**Use sleeping tablets sparingly** and **ONLY** in times of acute stress and as a means of temporarily resetting better sleep patterns by having some additional time out. Always talk to your doctor before using any sleep aids that you've purchased over-the-counter.

## USEFUL RESOURCES:

Pain & Sleep - National Sleep Foundation

[www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-disorders-problems/pain-and-sleep](http://www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-disorders-problems/pain-and-sleep)

Sleep Well with Pain leaflet - Live Well With Pain

[livewellwithpain.co.uk](http://livewellwithpain.co.uk) › Resources › Resources for patients



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Inspected and rated

**Outstanding** ★



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