



Difficulty Sleeping

Information for the carers and loved ones of someone with a life-limiting illness.

Caring for someone with a life-limiting illness can be an incredibly stressful time. You may have concerns and worries that are contributing to sleep difficulties.

Why is sleep important?

Sleep is an important part of our life. It helps us to feel focussed and increases our ability to handle stress.

What can be done to help with sleep difficulties?

There are changes you can make to your daily routine that may assist you with sleep difficulties. Healthy sleeping habits that help you fall asleep and stay asleep are known as sleep hygiene.

Changes you can make before going to bed

It is important to create a sleep-inducing bedroom. Have your bedroom quiet, dark and at a cool temperature if you can. Your bed and bedding should be comfortable and restful. It is also helpful to keep your bedroom for sleeping only. Remove any distractions from your bedroom such as TVs, computers, phones, and tablets.

Going to bed around the same time every night and setting a fixed wake up time also helps. Try to wind down at least 30 minutes before going to bed. Take a warm bath, read, listen to soothing music or drink a warm glass of milk before bed. Lower the lights and disconnect from devices at least 30 minutes before bed.

During the day, try to exercise or do some physical activity as this can help with sleeping at night

What to do if you can't fall asleep or get back to sleep during the night.

If you find yourself still awake after about 20–30 minutes, get out of bed and do something relaxing in low light. Try practising some mindfulness or relaxation exercises.

If you are worrying and having repeated thoughts, try to practice scheduling these thoughts or worries for the next day. Explore them during the day when you're not overtired. If you find yourself struggling with these thoughts, seek support.

What else may be of help?

If you are having difficulty sleeping, it may help to watch your caffeine intake during the day. Try to avoid caffeine in the evenings. Alcohol can also impact sleep quality, as can smoking. Avoiding smoking and monitoring your alcohol intake may assist.

Not every one of these interventions will work for everyone. Choose the ones that work best for you and your situation.