

Rest and sleep in hospital

Information for patients



Rest and sleep in hospital

Some patients find it difficult to rest and sleep in hospital. Having other people around, noise from patients or noise from machines on the ward can make it very difficult to relax. Being in hospital can be very daunting and you may have worries about your care, treatment or things that are happening outside of hospital; perhaps related to family or your situation at home.

Staff involved in your care will want to know if you have worries or concerns so that they can help. You may just need some additional information or reassurance that will make you feel less worried. If you have any worries or concerns, please discuss them with a member of staff. If you need more support than this or need to speak to someone specific this can be arranged so please don't be afraid to ask.

If you are struggling to rest or sleep please let the nursing staff know as they may be able to help. There are some suggestions on the following page that you may wish to try. If light or noise is disturbing you ask the nursing staff for a sleep kit containing an eye mask and a set of earplugs. These are only for use by one person, so please take them home and bring them in with you if you are a hospital inpatient again in the future.

Top tips

- **Ask for a milky drink**
These are known to aid relaxation and sleep.
- **Avoid drinks containing caffeine**
Caffeine is a stimulant so will be more likely to keep you awake.
- **Make sure you are not too hot or too cold**
Nursing staff can provide extra blankets if needed, or remove them if you are too hot.
- **Make sure you are comfortable**
If you are unwell or have had surgery it can be difficult to find a comfortable position; please ask the nursing staff if you need assistance to get comfortable.
- **Try to use the toilet before you settle down for the night and if you are in any pain ask nursing staff for pain relief**
Needing the toilet and being in pain are two of the main reasons patients have a disturbed night's sleep.
- **Read for a while, listen to some relaxing music or try some relaxation exercises**
There is information about relaxation techniques on page six.

Respect other patients' need to rest and sleep

Rest and sleep is an important part of recovery so please be considerate of the needs of your fellow patients, especially if they choose to rest or sleep at different times to you.

When the main lights are turned out please turn your TV off or use the headphones provided. If you do not have a set of headphones, ask a member of the nursing team.

Please talk quietly at night time. Talking with staff and other patients can help you to relax and make your stay a little more pleasant. If you are chatting to staff or patients please be mindful of other patients who may be trying to rest or sleep.

Please keep noise and movement during the night to a minimum. If you need assistance to get to the bathroom or find something from your bedside locker during the night, please ask a member of staff to help. Use your call bell rather than calling out to avoid disturbing other patients.

Reduce noise from mobile phones

It is recognised that patients use their mobile phones whilst in hospital. For some this is an important part of keeping in touch with loved ones. If you do use your phone there are a few things you can do to reduce the risk of disturbing your fellow patients:

- Please switch your phone to silent. If you do make or receive a call try to do this out of earshot of other patients, especially during the night.
- If you do need to make or receive a call at the bedside, please keep the call time to a minimum and speak quietly.
- If you need to speak at length, please ask a member of the nursing team whether there is somewhere private for you to do so.

Relaxation

Relaxation is good for everyone, but if you are struggling to rest or sleep relaxation exercises can be particularly helpful. Practicing some relaxation exercises before you settle down is a great way to wind down, calm the mind and prepare for sleep.

Relaxation techniques

Deep breathing

- Close your eyes and try taking deep, slow breaths, making each breath even deeper than the last. Concentrate on breathing slowly in a regular rhythm. Fill up the whole of your lungs with air, without forcing. Imagine you're filling up a bottle, so that your lungs fill from the bottom.
- Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.
- Breathe in slowly and regularly counting from one to five (don't worry if you can't reach five at first).
- Then let the breath escape slowly, counting from one to five.
- Keep doing this until you feel calm. Breathe without pausing or holding your breath.
- Practice this relaxed breathing for three to five minutes.

Deep muscle relaxation

Close your eyes and begin by focusing on your breathing; breathing slowly and deeply, as described above. If you have pain in certain muscles, or if there are muscles that you find it difficult to focus on, spend more time on relaxing other parts.

You may find it easier doing the following exercises lying on your back, but don't worry if you can't, just find a comfortable position.

For each exercise, hold the stretch for a few seconds, then relax.

Repeat this a couple of times. It's useful to keep to the same order as you work through the muscle groups:

- **Face:** push the eyebrows together as though frowning then release
- **Neck:** gently tilt the head forwards, pushing your chin down towards your chest then slowly lift again
- **Shoulders:** pull them up towards the ear (shrug) then relax them down towards the feet
- **Chest:** breathe slowly and deeply into the diaphragm (below your bottom rib) so that you're using the whole of your lungs, then breathe slowly out, allowing the stomach to deflate as all the air is exhaled
- **Arms:** stretch the arms away from the body then pull them back towards you, then relax
- **Wrists and hands:** stretch the wrist by pulling the hand up towards you, and stretch out the fingers and thumbs, then relax

Spend some time lying quietly after your relaxation with your eyes closed.

Further information

If you have any questions or concerns please talk to a member of staff. You can also ask to speak to the matron in charge of your ward.

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