



Royal Berkshire
NHS Foundation Trust

Sleep hygiene for patients following a stroke or traumatic brain injury (TBI)

Tips that aim to improve your
sleep routine

This leaflet provides patients who have had a stroke or brain injury, their family or carers with advice on promoting good sleep hygiene in hospital and at home. It provides practical advice that may help you to improve your sleep routine.

What is ‘sleep hygiene’?

‘Sleep hygiene’ was developed in the late 1970s as a method to help people with mild to moderate insomnia. Basically it refers to healthy sleeping habits, which are important for both physical and mental health, as well as your overall quality of life.

Disturbed sleep is common following a stroke or traumatic brain injury, affecting 30–70% of individuals, so sleep hygiene may help.

1. Routine

- Keep a regular sleep routine – wake up and go to sleep roughly at the same time every day. This programmes the brain and internal body clock to get used to a certain routine.

2. Wind down

- Give yourself up to 1½ hours to ‘wind down’ before going to sleep.
- Stop using technology (TV, tablets, smartphones) for at least 1 hour prior to sleep, as the screen light stimulates the brain.
- Take a warm bath or shower before bedtime to help you feel relaxed and drowsy. Use Epsom salts or lavender oil.
- Complete a ‘to do’ list or keep a ‘worry diary’ next to your bed to help to try ‘park’ thoughts or worries at night.
- Try activities like muscle relaxation techniques, meditation and aromatherapy, or listen to relaxing music or read a book.

3. Daylight

- Make sure you get some natural light during the day as it improves daytime energy, as well as nighttime sleep quality and duration.

4. Exercise

- Regular exercise, like walking, swimming and stretching can help you sleep better. However, try not to engage in strenuous exercise before bed as this can interfere with sleep.

5. Avoid daytime napping

- It is better to avoid naps during the day or limit it to a maximum of 45 minutes per day to encourage a better sleep at night.

6. Diet

- Don't go to bed too full or too hungry, as this can disturb sleep.
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol, nicotine and sugar at least 4-6 hours before bed. These substances act as stimulants and interfere with your ability to fall asleep.
- If you wake at night to use the toilet regularly, try drinking more water in the morning; in the evening only take sips of water.

7. Sleep diary

- Keeping a sleep diary can be useful to monitor sleep and as an evaluation tool as techniques to promote sleep are incorporated into your lifestyle.

8. Bedroom environment

- The bedroom should be use for sleep and sex only, to support the body and brain to associate the bedroom with sleep.
- Ideally, your bedroom needs to be dark, quiet, tidy, and kept at temperature of between 18 and 24C.
- Dim lights during the evening as your brain registers this like the sun setting and helps to get your body ready for rest and sleep.
- Keep the bedroom quiet – try use of thicker curtains, extra glazing on bedroom windows, or use earplugs and eye masks.
- Remove or turn your electronic clock away from you and try not to look at it during the night.

9. Hospital environment

Here are some tips you can use to improve your sleep routine while you are in hospital:

- Sit out in your chair, if possible, during the day.
- Use the bedside lighting during the day to increase alertness.
- Engage in stimulating activities like crosswords /sudoku etc. and interact with other patients, family members and staff.
- Ask ward staff if there are earplugs and eye masks available on the ward. If not, ask your family or friends to bring some in.
- Ask staff for help with the ward temperature, e.g. open windows if too hot or ask for extra blankets if too cold at night.
- Ask ward staff or family if there are any resources available to support with sleep, e.g. relaxing music, reading a book.

These are all simple suggestions; find the ones that work best for you.

Want more information?

Speak to your occupational therapist for more sleep hygiene advice.

Useful websites

- www.headway.org.uk/about-brain-injury/individuals/brain-injury-and-me/top-tips-for-a-good-nights-sleep/
- msktc.org/tbi/factsheets/sleep-and-traumatic-brain-injury
- www.stroke.org.uk/effects-of-stroke/tiredness-and-fatigue

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

RBFT Occupational Therapy

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