

# FACT SHEET:

**Category:**  
Life After ABI

**Audience:**  
Person with an ABI

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ABIOS Neuropsychologist



# ABIOS

Acquired Brain Injury Outreach Service

## Getting a Good Nights Sleep After Brain Injury

### Introduction

Sleep patterns can change for many reasons:

- Changes in sleep routines due to work, living situation, or family illness or injury
- Changes in your physical health and well-being
- Stress and worry



Good sleep patterns are important so that you have enough energy for all your daily activities (work, home, driving, having a social life). Lack of sleep can affect alertness, concentration and mood.

### Strategies to improve the quality of your sleep:

#### 1. Get into a good sleep routine

- Go to bed only when you feel sleepy at night-time.
- Try to get to sleep at about the same time every day.
- No matter how poor your sleep at night, get up at the same time every day - use an alarm clock.
- Don't oversleep because of a poor night's sleep.

#### 2. Sleep only at night time

- Sleep during the day will affect your sleep at night so try to avoid naps during the day.
- Early on after an injury, people may find they need to have day-time rest or sleep to manage fatigue, but try to keep the naps short and don't nap after mid afternoon
- If you get tired try to just have a rest on the couch. Don't rest on your bed.

#### 3. Wind down before bedtime

- Don't watch exciting movies just before bedtime.
  - Do some relaxation exercises
  - Try a relaxation tape
  - Listen to some relaxing music

- Start preparing for bed at least 30 minutes before bed e.g. lock the house, have a shower, put on pyjamas, brush your teeth, turn down the lights.
- Try a warm drink – e.g. milk

#### 4. Spend time in bed sleeping

- Don't do other activities in bed e.g. reading, watching television, or eating.
- Keep the bed only for sleeping.

#### If you are awake for a long time:

- Get out of bed.
- Do an activity until you are sleepy (make sure it is something boring).
- Go back to bed – repeat above if needed.

#### 5. Caffeine

- Avoid caffeine after lunch as this may affect your sleep at night-time.
- Caffeine is in coffee, tea, chocolate or cola drinks so be sure to cut down on all of them.
- Try decaffeinated tea or coffee as an alternative

#### 6. Alcohol, drugs, and medication

- Avoid drinking alcohol, especially at night time. Alcohol changes the kind of sleep you have, and can make sleep restless.
- If you smoke cigarettes, nicotine levels may also affect your sleep so try to cut down.
- Some prescription and recreational drugs can change your sleep patterns, so ask for information from your Pharmacist or GP.
- Over the counter medications (e.g. pseudoephedrine) can also change your sleep patterns, so ask your Pharmacist or GP for information about all the medications you are taking.

#### 7. Exercise

- Get some gentle, regular exercise because this will help with your sleep.
- Don't overdo it if you haven't been getting exercise for a while. Start slowly.
- Avoid exercising at least four hours before bed-time.

- Talk to your doctor or a Physiotherapist about the kind of exercise you can do.

#### 8. Time outside

- Spend some time in the sunshine during the day, because this may help with your sleep patterns e.g.
  - Sit outside with a book or magazine or the newspaper (remember sunscreen and a hat).
  - Go for a short walk
  - Do an activity outside in the fresh air e.g. gardening, walking the dog, hanging the washing, getting the mail

#### 9. Sleep Environment

- Make your bedroom and bed as comfortable and pleasant as possible.
- Remove clutter
- Get rid of any noise or distractions e.g. use ear-plugs to cut down on noise.
- Use curtains to block out light and noise and dim the lights.
- Make sure your pillow and bed are comfortable.
- Make sure the bedroom is the right temperature for the weather.
- Essential oils like lavender also can be relaxing, so a couple of drops in your bath water, or on your pillow may help create a relaxing feeling.

#### 10. Be patient.

- It can take time to re-settle sleep patterns so don't expect changes to happen over-night.
- Keep using the new ideas and you should start to see changes gradually.
- If you need further advice, talk to your GP or a Psychologist.

#### Resources

See other Acquired Brain Injury Outreach Service (ABIOS) Information sheets at <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/abios/>