

Medicines Management

Sleeping in Hospital

This booklet contains advice about how to sleep well while you are in hospital and when you leave.



Partnering with Consumers - 2.9 Where information for patients carers, families and consumers about health and health services is developed internally, the organisation involves consumers in its development and review. *Standard 2, 2nd edition*

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Talk to your nurse if you are worried about sleep while you are in hospital.



It is often difficult to sleep well in hospital, especially when you are ill or sharing a room with others. Reasons for changes to your sleep pattern during your hospital stay may include:

- Room lighting that is too bright.
- Night-time treatments and check-ups for you or your roommate.
- Noise from conversations, visitors, snoring, machines and televisions.
- Side effects from medicines. These might keep you awake at night or make you sleepy during the day so you can not fall asleep at night.
- Your illness and symptoms such as stress, pain, shortness of breath, or needing to go often to the toilet.



It is important not to get too worried if you have less sleep than normal. This is to be expected given the change in your health and environment.



Avoid requesting sleeping tablets in hospital as they have many side effects.



Potential hazards of sleeping tablets

- Can cause daytime drowsiness, confusion and agitation;
- Lead to falls and fractures;
- Prevent or reduce activities that help recovery;
- Interact with other medicines; and,
- Can be difficult to stop if taken for a long time

Tips for sleeping in hospital

Consider bringing items in this information booklet from home that may make you feel more comfortable and help you sleep.

Certain activities, books, audiobooks and music may help you relax while in hospital.

At Night



Limit food and drinks containing caffeine



Avoid caffeine, such as coffee, black or green tea, soft drink or soda, and chocolate at least 4 to 6 hours before bedtime.



Finish eating dinner at least 3 hours before you want to go to sleep.

Relax before bed

To relax before going to sleep, try any of the following relaxation activities:



Deep breathing exercises. Ask your nurse or midwife for instructions.



Listen to soothing music.



Read.



Have a shower before bed (check with your nurse or midwife if okay)



Meditation and Mindfulness. If you have a smartphone or tablet, you can find free apps to help sleep.

Keep the room dark



Ask the nurse or midwife if you can close the door and close the curtains.



Turn off the TV, computer/laptop screens and mobile phone.



Use an eye mask. If you do not have one you can ask the nurse or midwife for one.

Keep the room quiet



Silence or turn off your mobile devices after 10:00 pm.



Use earplugs or noise cancelling headphones to block out noise. If you do not have any you can ask the nurse / midwife for one.



Listen to white noise, such as a playlist with ocean sounds. Remember to use headphones if you have roommates. If you have a smartphone or tablet with apps such as Apple Music or Spotify, search for a 'white noise' playlist.

Sleep in comfort



If possible, wear comfortable clothes (bring your own).



Have enough blankets to keep you warm but not too hot, ask the nurse or midwife if you need more blankets as often hospitals can be a bit colder than you may be used to. Bring your own familiar pillow.



Go to the toilet before bed.



If pain is making it difficult to sleep, talk to your nurse or midwife about your pain and options to reduce pain.

If you can not fall asleep

Try to ease your mind with these strategies:



If you are worried, make a list of things you are worried about and then put them aside to deal with the next day.



Drift off listening to music or an audiobook.



Try a relaxation activity, such as reading a book (using a dim light) or practice mindfulness for about 30 minutes or until you are tired again.



Talk to the nurse or midwife if the environment is too noisy.

During the Day



Let light into your room

Light helps your body know what time of the day it is.



Open the curtains in the morning.



Turn the lights on if it is a dull day

Get as much exercise as you can



Try to do some light physical exercise activities, if you can.



Walk around the ward, if you can.



Do exercises in your bed or chair. Ask your nurse, midwife or physiotherapist for suitable exercises.

Limit your napping

Taking naps in the late afternoon can make it harder for you to fall asleep at night.



Try to stay awake during the day and only sleep at night.



Keep yourself occupied during the day to avoid wanting to nap during the day.



If you feel like you need to nap, take a short one earlier in the day and set an alarm to wake you up after 15 to 30 minutes (but no more than 40 minutes because this can make it difficult to sleep at night).

Speak with your healthcare worker



Ask your doctor, pharmacist, nurse or midwife about your schedule. Ask if it is possible that all medication and check-up times occur when you are awake.



Ask if the hospital has any services such as music therapy and relaxation therapy.

Where can I find out more information?

Please talk to your nurse, midwife or another member of the healthcare team about your sleep if you have concerns.

The following websites may be useful:



www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au



www.sleep.org.au

Notes

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