

Tips for sleep

(these should be entered into the resident's care plan as appropriate for each resident)



Good sleep habits

- Avoid excessive napping during the day (as it can disrupt or delay evening sleep)
- Gentle exercise during the day (but not just before bed)
- Get some morning sunshine
- Engage in enjoyable activities throughout the day
- Have a light evening meal (a heavy meal can make gastric reflux worse)
- Avoid stimulants (coffee, nicotine, even tea in the afternoon or evening)
- Avoid alcohol (which may make it easy to fall asleep but disrupts sleep later)
- Discuss the effects of any medications with your doctor (timing, dosage and how these impact sleep)

Establish a routine

- Try to associate your bed solely with sleeping
- Spend time performing other activities such as reading or watching television in a chair or different area
- Avoid falling asleep in the lounge chair
- Where possible, try and have the same routine before bed every night
- Try to wake up at the same time each morning
- Don't stay in bed if you are awake
- If it has been longer than 30 minutes, get up or sit up in bed
- Do something boring (don't watch exciting TV programs)
- Wait until sleepy, then try again

Things to try in bed

- Practise relaxation – such as mindfulness or diaphragmatic breathing
- Avoid clock watching
- Allow thoughts to arise and pass through without “buying into them”
- If a worrying thought keeps cropping up, put it aside to think about the next day (put a notepad by your bed and write it down)

Self-talk

- Provide reassurance and normalise that it takes time to get to sleep with pain
- Try not to give yourself a hard time if you can't fall asleep or stay asleep
- Focus on the benefits to your body in allowing time to rest and recover, even if you aren't asleep

Environment

- Make your bedroom a pleasant place to sleep (with a treasured photo or pleasant smells)
- Get extra pillows or supports to find a more comfortable position
- Turn all technology off before and during sleep (TV, mobile phones, computers and other devices)
- Keep the room clean and tidy
- Create a cool, comfortable temperature
- Reduce noise (use earplugs if necessary)
- Consider lighting (too light or too dark, consider a nightlight)

How care staff can help with sleep patterns at residential aged care facilities

- Ensure that all sleep requirements are added to the care plan
- Structure night staff routine to ensure that residents are not disturbed unnecessarily
- If residents wake, offer a warm drink and some breathing exercises to help settle back down
- For residents who have behavioural problems at night, check pain medication management and other causes with the multidisciplinary team