Improving Your Sleep During Your Hospital Stay

This information will help you improve your sleep during your hospital stay.

Sleeping well at night can make you feel better and give you more energy. It can also help you fight off infections and heal your wounds.

Changes in Sleep Pattern

Some people have a hard time sleeping while they are in the hospital. Changes to your natural sleep patterns may be caused by several things.

Lighting in the room

- Lighting may be too bright during the night.
- Lighting may be too dark during the day.

Treatments and checkups during the night, such as:

- Having your temperature, heart rate, blood pressure, and oxygen level checked.
- Getting blood drawn or having other tests.
- Getting your medications.
Healthcare providers caring for your roommate.

**Side effects of medications, such as:**

- Medications that keep you from falling asleep.
- Medications that make you sleepy (e.g., pain medications).

**Symptoms related to your cancer or treatment, such as:**

- Anxiety
- Pain
- Shortness of breath
- Having to go to the bathroom a lot

**Ways to Improve Sleep**

If you have trouble sleeping through the night or you feel tired the next day, try the suggestions below:

**Bring items from home**

You may want to bring some items to the hospital to help you sleep and make you feel more comfortable. If you don’t already have these with you, you may want to ask someone to bring them for you.

These items include:

- Earplugs
- Eye mask
- Earphones
- Bathrobe
- Slippers
- Pillow

During the Day

Let light in your room

- Raise your shades in the morning. It will help your body know what time of the day it is.

Get as much physical activity as you can

- Participate in physical therapy.
- Participate in activities offered in the Patient Recreation Pavilion on M15.
- Walk around the hospital floor.
- Do exercises in your bed or chair. Ask your nurse for the resource General Exercise Program: Level 1.

Limit your napping

- Taking naps in the late afternoon can make it harder for you to fall asleep at night.
- If you feel you must take a nap, take it earlier in the day and set an alarm to wake you up after 30 minutes.

Speak with your healthcare provider

- Ask your doctor or nurse if any changes can be made to your medication schedule so that you aren’t woken up during the
night to take it.

Contact our Integrative Medicine Service

- Our Integrative Medicine Service offers relaxation therapies while you’re in the hospital, such as massage therapy, music therapy, mind/body therapy, and acupuncture. These therapies may help you sleep better.
- You or your nurse can call the service at 646-888-0888.

At Bedtime

Limit food and drinks

- Avoid caffeine, such as coffee, black or green tea, sodas, and chocolate after noon.
- Finish eating dinner 3 hours before you want to go to sleep.

Take your sleep medication at the best time

- If you take sleep medication, ask your nurse to bring it to you 1 hour before you want to go to sleep.
- You should take your sleep medication between 9:00 PM and midnight, so you are not sleepy the next day.

Relax before bed

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

- Deep breathing exercises, See the section “Deep Breathing Exercise” for instructions.
- Meditation
• Massage
• Listening to music
• Reading

**Keep your room dark**

• Lower the blackout window shades.
• Close the curtains.
• Turn off the TV and computer screens.
• Use an eye mask.

**Keep the room quiet**

• Silence your cell phone after 10:00 PM.
• If you must keep the TV on, use earphones so you do not disturb your roommate.
• Ask all visitors and family members (unless they are spending the night) to go home at 8:00 PM.
• Use earplugs.
• Listen to white noise, such as a CD with ocean sounds.
• Turn on the TV in your room to listen to peaceful sounds.

**Ease your mind**

• If you can’t get your mind off your worries, make a list of things you are worried about. Then, write down what you can do to decrease that worry. For example, you may ask your doctor about a symptom or talk about your fears with a
friend or family member. Tell yourself that you will do those things the next day.

- If you can’t fall asleep, get up and take a short walk. You can also try a light activity, such as reading a book or doing a crossword puzzle for 30 minutes. Then, do a relaxation activity.

**Deep Breathing Exercise**

Deep breathing is an exercise that can help you relax. It’s very simple and you can teach it to yourself. It can help you clear your mind, release tension, and sleep better. You can do it any time you feel stressed or anxious.

1. Get into a comfortable position in a chair or in your bed. Raise your head as much as possible.
2. Place 1 hand on your stomach, just below your ribs. If you’re right handed, use your right hand; if you’re left handed, use your left hand.
3. Breathe out completely through your mouth.
4. If you can, close your eyes and breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose. Feel your stomach push up on your hand. Imagine that air is filling your whole body from the bottom up.
5. Pause for a couple of seconds. Then, breathe out slowly through your mouth or nose. Try to breathe out completely and imagine the air leaving your lungs, mouth, or nose.
6. As you breathe out, allow your body to relax and go limp—
like a rag doll.

7. Repeat the exercise 5 to 10 times.

If you have any questions or concerns, talk with a member of your healthcare team. You can reach them Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM at __________________________. After 5:00 PM, during the weekend, and on holidays, please call________________________. If there’s no number listed, or you’re not sure, call 212-639-2000.

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