

Insomnia/Sleep Disorders

Many patients who are being treated with oncology therapy have difficulty sleeping. Poor sleep patterns can affect you in many ways, most notably by leaving you tired throughout the day. Sleep disturbances may also cause or worsen poor concentration, anxiety, or depression. Be sure to speak with your health care provider who will help customize a sleep strategy that can work for you.

You should only associate your bed with sleep;
don't eat, read, or watch TV in bed.

Regular sleep schedule

Set your bedtime and wake-up time for the same times each day, including weekends.

Routine bedtime activities

A pattern of activities (such as brushing your teeth, washing your face, setting your alarm clock), performed the same way each night, can set the mood for sleep.

Bedroom environment

Your bedroom environment should be conducive to sleep: dark, quiet, and cool. You should only associate your bed with sleep; don't eat, read, or watch television in bed, for example. Fans and white noise machines can help eliminate disturbing noise, and heavy curtains or an eye mask can eliminate light.

Exercise

Light aerobic exercise, such as walking or water exercises, can boost energy, reduce stress, and help you to sleep. Exercising early in the day is best if you're having trouble sleeping. Always check with your health care provider *before* beginning any exercise regimen.

Pillows

Strategic placement of pillows (such as between the knees or under the waist) can help make you more comfortable.

Relaxation techniques

Reading, taking a warm bath, or drinking warm milk are all activities that may help you relax before bedtime. You can also try techniques such as visual imagery, progressive muscle relaxation, and deep breathing exercises.

Avoidance of stimulants and diuretics

Watch out for these too close to your bedtime—or at all: caffeinated foods like chocolate, smoking, appetite suppressants, and prescription diuretics. You shouldn't eat anything for at least 3 hours before going to bed, especially not a heavy meal. Also, avoid alcohol, and limit intake of caffeinated beverages, especially before bedtime. In fact, make sure you stop drinking fluids 2-3 hours prior to retiring and always urinate right before you go to sleep.

Finally, try to keep in mind that the discomfort you are experiencing is going to pass, and therapy may bring you long-term benefits and may help you feel like yourself again. Remember, it is important to work with your health care professional to design your own personalized sleep strategy. Good luck!

This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice. Consult your health care provider for individualized information about your therapy. Your health care provider should be your primary source of information about your medical condition and treatment.

