Managing Sleep Problems in Chronic Pain
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Sleep can become a problem in chronic pain. People can develop bad habits such as:

- taking long daytime naps
- drinking too much alcohol
- spending all day in bed.

These make sleep problems worse. Thankfully sleep should improve if you use the advice in this leaflet and stick with it.

Should I take a daytime nap?

No. Not getting up in the morning or taking long naps will mean you are less likely to sleep at bedtime. So get up in the morning (even after a bad night) and limit any nap to fifteen minutes.

Does physical activity help sleep?

Yes. Sleep will follow more naturally after a full day living life as well as is possible. However, chronic pain means it is important to pace physical activity evenly and avoid overdoing it.

I sleep with the TV on. Is that a good idea?

No. If you’ve got a sleep problem, your bed should really be just for sleeping or intimacy. TV or reading can be a good part of your wind down routine but try doing these activities elsewhere. Some people choose to watch TV or read on the sofa, a recliner, or even in a different bedroom to where they sleep.

- Have a relaxing wind down routine e.g. a nice warm bath, a milky drink, dimmed lights and gentle entertainment.
- People with chronic pain can find changing into bed clothes and washing tiring so why not do that earlier in the evening?
- Many people use formal relaxation strategies such as listening to a relaxation CD or meditating to help them become sleepy.

What else can I do?

- Avoid caffeine leading to bed time (so no tea, cola or IRNBRU in the evening. Herb teas or milky drinks can be good alternatives.
- Get your bedroom as comfortable as possible. There is no hard and fast rule about a soft or firm mattress. It is important to get the temperature, and lighting to suit you.
- Only go to bed when you are sleepy – this makes it more likely you will fall asleep.
- Aim to be sleeping for most of the time you spend in bed. Try the 15 minute rule. So if you haven’t fallen asleep in about fifteen minutes, get up. Once you get up start your wind-down routine again and try going to bed again when you feel sleepy. Discussing the above with your partner may help.

Following all this advice takes discipline and effort. Better sleep is the reward you can earn.

- Further information is available from:
  - www.painassociation.com
  - www.painconcern.org.uk

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