

Sleep Management in Parkinson's

Booklet 3

Developing Good Sleep Habits



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Developing Good Sleep Habits

In the last booklet we explained how **sleep hygiene** provides the first practical steps towards improving your sleep. We also explained that poor sleep hygiene can make insomnia worse, but it is rarely the main cause of insomnia. In this booklet we focus on those sleep habits which often are responsible for insomnia, and explain how you can change your behaviour in order to improve your sleep.

Seven Steps to Overcome Insomnia

Introduction

In this booklet we focus on those bad sleep habits which play a very important role in insomnia, and explain how these habits can be changed in order to improve your sleep. This part of the self-help programme has three specific objectives:

- **To help you sleep when you want to.** You cannot force yourself to sleep. But you can create circumstances which will promote sleep at desired times.
- **To strengthen the association between your sleep and your bedroom.** People suffering from insomnia often come to associate their bedroom with anxiety or frustration (after all, the bedroom has become the place where you frequently find yourself unable to sleep). This booklet will take you through the steps necessary to remove these unhelpful associations, and re-establish an association between your bedroom and your sleep.
- **To improve your sleep efficiency.** To deal with insomnia, many people spend more time in bed than is necessary. The goal of this self help programme is to spend as much time as possible **asleep** in bed, not to spend the most possible time in bed.

1 Decrease the time you spend in bed

This step, called **sleep restriction**, consists of keeping the **number of hours spent in bed** as close as possible to the actual **number of hours you spend asleep**. Spending longer in bed is one of the most common strategies used by people to manage their insomnia symptoms. However, while it may bring short-term relief, this strategy is not effective in the long run, as sleep will only become more fragmented and restless and insomnia symptoms will be perpetuated. Even if the amount of time you spend in bed does not seem excessive, **there is no reason to stay in bed if you are not asleep**.

The main aim of sleep restriction is to create a state of mild sleep deprivation. This promotes a feeling of sleepiness in the evening, which in turn can improve the continuity and the depth of your sleep.

How to decrease the time you spend in bed.

i. Calculate the average number of hours that you slept in the previous week using your sleep diary (add up the total number of hours you slept, and then divide that total by 7).

Your task now is to match the amount of time you spend in bed with the average amount of time you spend asleep. So if, on average, you spend 6 hours asleep each night, then you will aim to spend only 6 hours in bed each night. This period is called your **sleep window**.

To avoid excessive sleepiness the next day, do not decrease your sleep window to less than 5 hours per night.

ii. Now that you have calculated the duration of your sleep window, you must choose a preferred regular bedtime and getting-up time. Remember, you can only be in bed for the duration of your sleep window – no longer. If you live with someone who is caring for you discuss this with them to try and find times that would suit both of you.

iii. Keep to the same sleep window for a complete week (7 nights). At the end of the week, it will be time to evaluate your sleep by calculating your Sleep Efficiency as explained in Booklet 1.

My sleep efficiency for the first week of sleep restriction is (write in the boxes below):

The average time I spent asleep	divided by ÷	The average amount of time I spent in bed	Answer	multiplied by x 100	Answer
			_____		_____ %

iv. If your Sleep Efficiency is **lower than 80%** (this means you are spending 20% of your sleep window awake), decrease your sleep window by 15 minutes. You can decide whether you want to go to bed later or wake up earlier, but it is important that you reduce your time in bed. Do remember that if you live with someone who is caring for you discuss this with them, so that you can try and find times that would suit you both.

If your Sleep Efficiency is higher than **85%**, increase your sleep window by 15 minutes. You can decide whether you want to go to bed earlier or wake up later.

If your Sleep Efficiency is **between 80% and 85%**, leave your sleep window as it is.

In the beginning, it is possible that you may experience some sleepiness during the day. This is **normal** and **temporary**. After a couple of weeks you may realise that in spite of your reduced time in bed, you function just as well during the day. Your duration of sleep may not necessarily be increased, but your Sleep Efficiency, and the quality of your sleep will be much improved.

Maintaining a sleep window can be difficult, especially at weekends and on days when you are exceptionally sleepy. However, doing your best to maintain this procedure is very important to the success of the self-help programme. Remember – your sleep window only represents the maximum amount of time you spend in bed. Some of the advice offered below may result in your spending less time in bed than this total amount.

Special circumstances which may apply in Parkinson's

If you have mobility problems, and you spend some time in or on your bed in the morning preparing to get up, do not include this time in your sleep window. Similarly, if you like to take your medication while you are in bed in the morning and wait a little before getting up, do not include this time in your sleep window.

2 Leave at least 1 hour to unwind before you go to bed

Use this time for reading, watching television, listening to music or even chatting with someone, **but do this somewhere other than your bedroom**. As you get closer to your bedtime, it is best not to think too much about the events of the day or your plans for tomorrow. Planning can create **mental stimulation**, which is just another sort of arousal which can keep you awake. If you have worries or concerns, set aside time during the day or early evening to focus on these issues. There isn't anything wrong with worrying and trying to solve problems, but, there is a time and place for everything, and focusing on your worries before you go to bed is certainly the wrong time.

Here's a tip: if you cannot get rid of worries or concerns, set time aside during the day to write them down and then plan how you will deal with them at another time.

3 Go to bed only when you are sleepy

Waiting to be sleepy helps people to fall asleep faster. Going to bed too early means you have time to worry about problems (or just worry about your inability to fall asleep). This serves only to keep you awake. It is best, then, if you delay going to bed until you feel sleepy (but of course, you must still only go to bed inside your sleep window). It is important to realise that tiredness and sleepiness are different. Tiredness is a feeling of exhaustion which does not necessarily involve the desire to sleep. Sleepiness, however, means a tendency to fall asleep. Sleepiness is recognisable by signs such as yawning, heavy eyelids, sore eyes, or even unsteadiness.

4 If you are unable to fall asleep within 20 minutes, get out of bed and find something else to do in another room

We mentioned earlier that people who have problems with insomnia frequently spend longer in bed than people who don't have sleep problems. As a person with symptoms of insomnia you may think "If I get up now, I'll be awake for the rest of the night, but If I just stay in bed I'll eventually fall asleep", or perhaps you think "At least if I stay in bed I'm getting some rest". In fact, lying in bed trying to get to sleep only increases anxiety, frustration and **arousal**, which disturbs your sleep even further. If you really want to break out of this vicious circle, you should just get up. If you need assistance when getting out of bed it is particularly important to discuss the self-management programme with your carer. If they are prepared and understand what the programme entails it will be much easier for you both.

There is no need to watch the clock, as this alone will keep you awake. When *about* 20 minutes have passed and you're still awake, leave the bed, go to another room, and engage in some quiet activity.

Return to bed only when you feel sleepy again. Do **not** leave your bedroom only to fall asleep in a chair or on a settee, since this will not help to rebuild the association between your bed and sleep. **Initially, you may have to repeat these steps several times during the night.** It is important that the steps are followed when you are unable to fall asleep at bedtime and when you wake during the night and are unable to get back to sleep.

We really do understand that it will be difficult at first. However, if you try hard and keep to the instructions you will soon learn to associate your bed and bedroom with getting to sleep quickly.

One problem when implementing these instructions is the tendency for people to return to bed too soon after getting up. Some people have the feeling that, if they stay up too long, they will never get back to sleep. In fact, the reverse is true; **the longer you stay up, the more quickly you will fall asleep when you return to bed.**

You may be reluctant to leave the comfort of your bed, particularly if you think you may be cold or bored while waiting for sleepiness to come. To overcome these difficulties, be prepared: keep a warm blanket or dressing gown near the bed, or reserve a comfortable place in the house, and plan the activities that can be done there.

These activities should not be so interesting that your mind becomes too active, nor should they be so boring that you have no motivation to get up. Ideally, the activities should not require too much preparation, and should also not be so enjoyable that they decrease your motivation to return to bed. Here’s a list of activities we would recommend, together with some activities we think are best avoided. Choose an activity (it may not be in the list) which suits you.

What kind of things can I do if I get up in my sleep window?	
Things you could do	Things you should avoid
Reading Watching television Doing crossword puzzles Knitting Writing Drawing Listening to the radio	Doing housework or cleaning Taking a walk or exercising working on a computer Worrying Relaxing on the bed or in a chair

5 Use an alarm clock to maintain a regular getting-up time in the morning

Set an alarm clock and, if you are able to, get out of bed at approximately the same time every morning based on your sleep window, **whether it is a weekday or weekend, and regardless of your bedtime or the amount of sleep you had the previous night.** This will help regulate your internal clock (your ‘body clock’) and synchronise your sleep-wake rhythm.

‘Lying in’ is a very common practice to make up for lost sleep. This can be beneficial in the short-term, but people suffering from insomnia are particularly vulnerable to its negative effects. So, maintain a strict and regular getting-up time every morning, even at weekends.

6 Reserve your bed and bedroom for sleep and sex only

This is a golden rule. Do not read, eat, watch television, listen to the radio, work, or worry in your bed or bedroom either during the day or at night. **These activities make a sleep problem worse.** Sexual activity is the only exception, since it can have a relaxing effect. When you engage in other activities in your bedroom, the environment becomes associated with **wakefulness** rather than **sleepiness and sleep.** You could argue that some people fall asleep reading in bed or take pleasure watching television in their bedroom before bedtime. However, these people probably don’t have a sleep problem. If you suffer from insomnia and you engage in such activities, it really is best if you stop them completely. The aim is to restore a strong association between your bedroom and sleep.

7 Do not nap during the day

For people who do not suffer from insomnia, there is nothing wrong with napping, and short naps during the day can have a powerful revitalising effect for some people. But for many people, napping diminishes the quality of sleep, and decreases the amount of deep sleep the following night.

Excessive daytime sleepiness (EDS) is a common feature of Parkinson's and may occur as a result of the disease process, poor night time sleep, depression, anti-parkinsonian or other medications. For people who have problems getting to sleep (or staying asleep) at night, sleepiness is an important resource. Try not to squander your sleepiness on naps; save it until your bed-time.

In conclusion

While the 7 steps to good sleep habits are fairly straightforward, putting them into practice will require patience and determination for both you and anyone who cares for you. At first it will seem difficult, and the occasional set-back is to be expected. But, in order to get the most out of the programme, it is important to apply all of the steps (not just those which seem easiest). All of the steps work together.

You may find that sleep gets worse for the first few nights, or that you wake up in the morning feeling more exhausted than usual. Do not get discouraged, this is normal early on in the programme. The benefits will become more evident with time and practise. The single most important factor in determining whether your sleep will improve is the consistency with which you follow the instructions. In general, people who follow these steps notice marked improvement in their sleep after 3 or 4 weeks. **It really is worth the effort.**

The treatment programme may sound more painful than the sleep problem you are trying to overcome. Remember though, this is a small price to pay if you have suffered with insomnia symptoms for months or years. Also keep in mind that it takes time to learn new habits, and that the secret to success lies in repetition. At first, it may feel unnatural to get out of bed in the middle of the night. However, once you have beaten insomnia, you may no longer have to perform this step. **Changing ingrained habits is not an easy thing to do, but it is essential if you want to succeed in overcoming insomnia.**

That's the end of the third booklet. In the next booklet we will examine how beliefs about sleep can affect insomnia and how they can be modified to improve sleep.

Remember

For the first few nights, you may get up several times before finally falling asleep. You may also feel sleepy and your ability to function the next day can be diminished. You may be discouraged and even consider giving up on the programme. You may try to find excuses to avoid following the steps. But remember that an increase in sleepiness is an indication that the programme is working. Improving your sleep is well worth this temporary discomfort.

Seven Steps to Overcome Insomnia

1	Decrease the number of hours you spend in bed
2	Leave at least 1 hour to unwind before going to bed (somewhere other than your bedroom)
3	Go to bed only when you are sleepy
4	If you are unable to fall asleep within <u>20 minutes</u> , get out of bed and find something else to do in another room
5	Use an alarm clock to maintain a regular getting-up time in the morning (even at weekends)
6	Reserve your bed and bedroom for sleep and sex only
7	Do not nap during the day

