

# Sleep Management in Parkinson's

## Booklet 2

### Sleep Hygiene



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## Sleep Management in Parkinson's

In the last booklet we described the vicious circle of insomnia. In this booklet we explain how you can recognise and tackle habits which may be detrimental to your sleep.

In everyday life there are simple things we can do which promote sleep, and equally simple things we can do which disrupt sleep. Controlling these things is called **Sleep Hygiene**. It may be that only a few of the habits and behaviours described in this booklet apply to you. Nevertheless, thinking about and, if necessary, improving sleep hygiene is the first sensible step towards taking control of your sleep.

### The Basics of Good Sleep Hygiene

#### Introduction

The first step in managing a sleep problem is to identify and avoid those everyday habits which can disrupt sleep, and to identify and practise those behaviours which can promote sleep. In this booklet, you will learn the basics of **sleep hygiene**.

We understand, however, that some habits are easier to change than others. Remember motivation and effort are the keys to success.

### 10 Rules for Improved Sleep Hygiene

Listed below are 10 rules of sleep hygiene, together with an explanation of why each is important. Following these rules will help to get the most out of your sleep now, and will also help other parts of this self-help programme to work better.

#### 1 Discontinue caffeine use 4 hours before bedtime

Caffeine is the most widely used 'social' drug in our society, and can be found in tea, coffee, chocolate, cocoa and many soft drinks. Caffeine is a **stimulant**, which means it can make us feel more awake. These stimulating effects of caffeine can persist for about 3-4 hours after consumption. If it is taken too close to bedtime, therefore, caffeine can increase the time it takes us to get to sleep and make our sleep lighter and more restless.

Sensitivity to caffeine varies among individuals. However, two things are important to keep in mind. First, sensitivity to the stimulating effects of caffeine increases with age – so just because caffeine has not affected your sleep in the past doesn't mean it isn't contributing to your sleep problem now. And second, some people with insomnia appear to be particularly sensitive to caffeine. In general, caffeine used near bedtime will disrupt the quality of sleep in everyone, even in those who claim it has no effect on their sleep.

## **2 If you smoke, avoid smoking around bedtime and when you wake up during the night**

Nicotine is also a stimulant. Although smokers may experience a sense of relaxation, the overall effect of nicotine is similar to that of caffeine. The result is that smoking leads to arousal, which is detrimental to sleep (and if combined with caffeine the effects of nicotine are particularly detrimental to sleep).

Scientific research shows that smokers, particularly those who smoke 20-a-day, take longer to fall asleep and wake up more frequently than non-smokers. On the other hand, the research shows that smoking cessation improves sleep patterns, despite some initial withdrawal symptoms during the day. If you are a smoker, the best advice is to stop smoking altogether. If you are not prepared to stop altogether, it is important to reduce your smoking in the hours before bedtime.

It is also important to **avoid smoking when you wake at night**, otherwise you may inadvertently 'train' your body to wake up during the night for a cigarette.

## **3 Be careful with alcohol at bedtime; it may help you get to sleep, but it can also wake you up later in the night**

Alcohol is also a drug which can affect sleep. Alcohol is a central nervous system 'depressant', which means it has a sedative effect on the mind and body. However, as the body eliminates the drug, these effects wear off, leading to periods of 'withdrawal' (when we experience the opposite effects of the drug). Alcohol taken at night, therefore, can help us to get to sleep (the sedative effect). BUT the process of drug elimination can lead to restlessness and night-time awakenings (the withdrawal effect).

As with all drugs which cause withdrawal effects, the timing of these effects will depend upon the speed at which the body eliminates the drug. Compared with, say, most sleeping tablets, alcohol is rapidly eliminated from the body, so withdrawal effects nearly always occur during sleep. Even a moderate amount of alcohol consumed in the evening can disrupt night-time sleep. If you have a sleep problem, then the best advice is to avoid alcohol for 4-6 hours before bedtime.

## **4 A light snack at bedtime may promote sleep - but avoid heavy meals**

Moderate food intake (snacks or milky drinks) can promote sleep in some people. On the other hand, a heavy meal at bedtime makes the digestive system work overtime, and can keep you awake. Avoid eating snacks when you wake at night, as your body might start expecting food at the 'wrong' times, causing you to wake up in the night feeling hungry. And to minimise trips to the toilet during the night, be careful how much you drink before bedtime. Waking up for the toilet is, for most people, not a problem, but once awake, people with insomnia may experience problems returning to sleep.

## **5 Avoid vigorous exercise within two hours of bedtime**

Exercise alone is unlikely to solve insomnia problems. However, regular physical exercise can be a useful addition to the methods you will learn in this self-help programme. For example, exercise is an excellent method for reducing stress. Regular physical activity, for example taking a walk each day when you are able to, can enhance your physical and emotional well being, and this in turn can help promote sleep.

## **6 Keep your bedroom calm and comfortable**

The ideal bedroom is calm and comfortable. It follows from this that, if you have a sleep problem, it is best if your bedroom looks relaxing rather than stimulating. If you are decorating, choose colours that are calm and soothing; avoid those that are stimulating or depressing. Keep furniture to a minimum, include only those items necessary to support the room's basic function (that is, helping you to sleep). Keep the bedroom tidy and make the bed in the morning rather than at bedtime; this will provide you with a sense of order and control in your life. You may need an alarm clock, but avoid watching it at night, as this will only keep you awake longer. Choose a quiet (electronic) clock, and preferably one which doesn't give off too much illumination at night.

There is a great deal of variation in people's preferences for personal items such as mattresses, pillows, and sheets. What matters most is that you are comfortable. Does your mattress provide the right kind of support? Is your bedding warm enough, or too heavy? Do you have enough pillows (or do you have too many)? When you get up in the morning do you feel that you would have slept better in a different bed? Again, it is all a matter of personal preference, but try to be as comfortable as you can.

## **7 Keep your bedroom temperature comfortable**

Avoid an excessively hot or cold temperature in the bedroom. Although there is no ideal room temperature for everyone, high room temperatures (24°C and above) interfere with normal sleep, increasing night-time awakenings, reducing deep sleep and causing restlessness. Sleep difficulties are less frequently associated with cold temperatures, although a room temperature below 12°C is sometimes associated with unpleasant and emotional dreams. On balance, then, it is preferable to keep your bedroom comfortably cool (16°C - 18°C if possible).

## **8 Minimise noise and light in the bedroom – but take advantage of light during the day**

Noise can be both annoying and disruptive to your sleep. People with insomnia symptoms tend to be more sensitive to noise than those who generally sleep well. In addition, the amount of noise necessary to wake someone up decreases with age, which helps to explain why older adults have more trouble staying asleep than younger people. To minimise external noise, you can close your windows, purchase ear plugs, or perhaps move into a quieter room.

Lighting conditions can affect sleep in almost anyone. It is particularly important to have a well-darkened bedroom with curtains or blinds that keep out street lights or daylight. The use of eye masks can help.

Remember, both light and noise can disturb sleep. We can't all change the environment in which we find ourselves, but there is usually something that can be done which allows you to feel some sense of control. Aim for the best sleeping environment under your present circumstances.

Through a special hormone, darkness tells our bodies to prepare for sleep, and light tells our bodies to stay awake. So, while light can be detrimental to sleep at night, it actually helps our bodies to stay awake during the day. If possible, take the opportunity to spend some time in daylight during the day. If you can't get out, make sure there is plenty of light in your home during the daytime (electric light can help), and if you need to sit for long periods indoors, try to do so near a window.

## **9 Keep your bedroom mainly for sleeping; try to avoid watching television, listening to the radio, or eating in your bedroom**

Bedrooms work best when they are associated with calmness and sleep. Don't make your bedroom into an office or a recreation area (or a dining room). We strongly advise you to avoid having entertainment media (television, DVD, stereo, radio, etc.) in your bedroom. Similarly, don't take snacks into the bedroom (either to eat before bed, or to eat if you wake up). As we shall emphasise in the next booklet, among people with insomnia, bedrooms should be reserved for sleep and sexual activity only. In this way you will come to associate your bedroom only with activities which lead to sleep.

## **10 Try to keep regular bedtimes and personal schedules**

Regularity is the guardian of better sleep. This regularity extends not only to bedtimes and getting-up times, but also to mealtimes, exercise time, and many of the other things we do on a regular basis. In the next booklet we will consider how to judge your best bedtime. Meanwhile, consider your own habits and judge how regular they are.

## **In conclusion**

This booklet has considered how some lifestyle and environmental factors can be influential in disturbing your sleep, and how knowledge of these factors can help you to improve your sleep.

Science also tells us that poor sleep hygiene by itself is rarely the main cause of insomnia. However, failure to maintain the rules of sleep hygiene may exacerbate any effects Parkinson's has on your sleep pattern and hinder your efforts to improve your sleep quality.

**That's the end of the second booklet. In the next booklet, we will consider how the habits which are responsible for insomnia can be changed.**

# 10 Rules for Improved Sleep Hygiene

1	Products containing caffeine (tea, coffee, cocoa, chocolate, soft drinks, etc.) should be discontinued at least 4 hours before bedtime. Caffeine is a stimulant and can keep you awake
2	Avoid nicotine (including nicotine patches or chewing gum, etc) an hour before bedtime and when waking at night. Nicotine is also a stimulant
3	Avoid alcohol around bedtime because although it can promote sleep <u>at first</u> , it can disrupt sleep later in the night
4	Avoid eating a large meal immediately before bedtime, although a light snack may be beneficial
5	Try to do regular (even mild) physical exercise if you are able, but avoid doing this in the 2 hours before bedtime
6	Keep the bedroom calm and tidy. Select a mattress, sheets, and pillows that are comfortable
7	Avoid extreme room temperature in the bedroom
8	Keep the bedroom quiet and darkened during the night, but try to spend some time in daylight (or bright artificial light) during the day
9	Keep your bedroom mainly for sleeping; try to avoid watching television, listening to the radio, or eating in your bedroom
10	Try to keep regular times of going to bed and getting up



