

Health matters

Factsheet 9: **Better sleep**

We all know the importance of a good night's sleep but it is not always easy to get our recommended eight hours. For carers this might be because you are disturbed in the night to help the person you care for, or you might suffer disturbed sleep because you are worried about your caring role, or you might always have struggled to sleep. We hope that these tips might help you improve your sleeping habits:

- Make sure your bedroom is comfortable – not too hot, cold or noisy.
- Try not to work or have your computer or TV in your bedroom.
- Get some regular exercise – swimming and walking are ideal – but try not to do this too near to bedtime as it might keep you awake.
- Take a look at your mattress. It should be firm enough to support you comfortably, but not so firm that you feel perched on top of it. It is recommended that you replace your mattress every 10 years so that it maintains maximum support and comfort.
- Try to cut down on tea and coffee in the evening, both contain stimulants.
- Try not to eat or drink a lot late at night - have your evening meal earlier if you can.
- Don't drink too much alcohol. It may help you fall asleep, but makes you more likely to wake up in the middle of the night and affects the quality of your sleep.
- Spend some time relaxing before you go to bed – a warm bath may help. There are many different relaxation techniques. You could try relaxation tapes and books that are readily available from your local library or you could join a relaxation class.
- Try to keep a regular pattern of going to bed and rising at the same time every day, even if you are not tired.

- Keep a notepad by your bed so that if you are worried about something, you can write it down and be ready to deal with it the next day.
- If you still cannot sleep, try not to lie there worrying. Get up and do something you find relaxing like reading, watching TV or listening to quiet music; after a while you may feel tired enough to go to bed again.
- Complementary therapies such as massage or aromatherapy can be a good way to relax.
- If your sleeplessness persists and it is starting to affect your wellbeing, please seek medical advice.

Carers Trust Hillingdon has a range of services that might help you. For more information please contact us on:

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