

SLEEP AND LOW BACK PAIN

Introduction

A good night's sleep is essential for managing existing low back pain and preventing new or worsening conditions.

Sleep allows the body to undergo an important repair process. Disturbed or insufficient sleep can disrupt this muscle relaxation and healing process. In turn, back and joint pain can have a significant effect on quality of sleep.

Practical measures for improving sleep¹

Create a healthy sleep environment

One hour before bed, turn off the television and disconnect from devices such as a computer or mobile phone. Your bedroom should be dark, cool, calm, and free of these devices as well.

Exercise to sleep better

Being physically active can improve both sleep quality and energy levels during the day. Aim for a minimum of 150 minutes of moderate exercise per week.²

Some people find that exercising later in the day makes it harder to fall or stay asleep at night, while others actually find that an afternoon or evening workout helps them sleep. Both options are safe and it depends on the individual: choose the one that works for you.³

More sleep advice

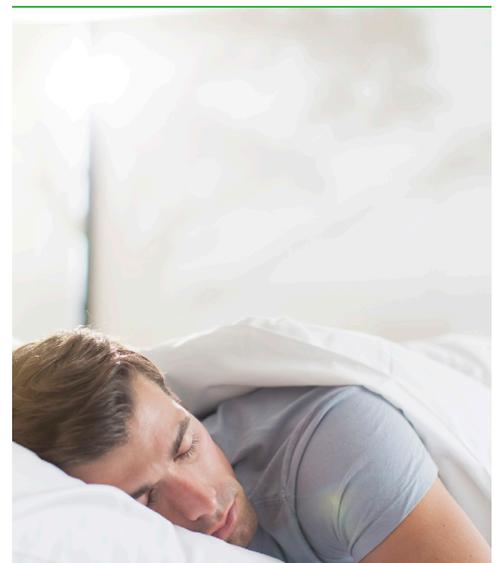
- Go to bed one hour earlier than normal, at least one night per week.

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- Try a “power nap”. A brief period of sleep during the day (maximum 20 minutes) can improve alertness and mood.
- If a busy mind is keeping you awake, try writing your thoughts down. This could be tomorrow’s “to do” list or simply some reflections on things that you are preoccupied with.
- Create a routine: try going to sleep and getting up at the same time every day, even on weekends.
- Beware of “hidden” caffeine: in addition to coffee, consider that tea, chocolate, certain soft drinks, and some medicines may contain caffeine. For a good night’s sleep, caffeine in any form should be avoided after lunchtime.

How much sleep do you need?

Everyone is different, but most people need about 7–9 hours’ sleep per night to function well.

Bed quality is vital

Pillow and mattress quality has a significant impact on sleep. Consider the following questions:

- Do I feel sore or stiff after waking up?
- Is my mattress over 10 years old?
- Does my mattress sag in places? Are there any lumps?
- Are my pillows more than 2 years old? (Depending on the quality, pillows need to be replaced every 6 months to 2 years).

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, it may be time to invest in a new mattress or buy a new pillow. Remember to lie down and try before you buy.

Important: If you’ve been sleeping poorly for more than a month, visit your doctor for some advice.

Questions about your diagnosis?

Unsure which treatment is right for you?

Did you know you have access to a free, independent and confidential decision support service?

Discuss your concerns and have your case reviewed by a specialist in your condition.

The decision is yours. And we’re with you all the way.



1. Healthy Sleep Tips. National Sleep Foundation website <https://sleepfoundation.org/sleep-tools-tips/healthy-sleep-tips>. Accessed February 27, 2017.
2. Study: Physical Activity Impacts Overall Quality of Sleep. National Sleep Foundation website. <https://sleepfoundation.org/sleep-news/study-physical-activity-impacts-overall-quality-sleep> Accessed August 29, 2018
3. How Exercise Affects Sleep. National Sleep Foundation website <https://sleep.org/articles/exercise-affects-sleep/> Accessed August 29, 2018.

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