

## Helping patients to rest and sleep in hospital

### Good quality rest and sleep is important for recovery whilst in hospital

Sleep will help your body repair itself and build immunity. Being rested may also help you manage your pain more effectively. A hospital stay can be an emotional and upsetting time for you and your loved ones, and having quality sleep helps everyone manage stress better.

Often patients find it difficult to rest and sleep in hospital overnight and during the day. Having other people around, noise from other patients, or noise from machines on the ward, can make it very difficult to relax. Being in hospital can be very daunting and you may have worries about your care, treatment or things that are happening outside of hospital - perhaps related to family or your situation at home. Staff involved in your care will want to know if you have worries or concerns so they can help. You may just need some additional information or reassurance that will make you feel less worried. If you need more support than this, or need to speak to someone specific this can be arranged so please don't be afraid to ask.

If you are struggling to rest or sleep please let the nursing team know as they may be able to help. Staff will make every effort to reduce noise and light disturbance on the ward overnight and during the day, although some disturbance is unavoidable.

Please see some suggestions below for things you can do to help yourself, and other patients, to rest and sleep:

- Let staff know if you are in pain. They may be able to help to reduce your pain with prescribed pain medication, or help you into a more comfortable position
- Ask for assistance with going to the toilet or repositioning to get comfortable on the bed or chair before settling down to rest or sleep. Let staff know if you are too hot or cold
- Keep your voice low when speaking to other patients, carers, visitors or staff, or when talking on your mobile phone if you are in a ward area shared with other patients. Staff may be able to assist with finding a quieter place for you to make important calls if other patients are resting or sleeping
- Keep mobile devices on vibrate (or silent) and switch loud notifications off
- Use your call bell to alert staff if you need assistance rather than calling out (with the exception of emergency situations where you should always shout for help)
- If watching TV or listening to music, please use headphones where possible. If headphones are not available, please keep volume levels down. Reduce screen brightness on devices overnight

## Information for Patients

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- Report faulty or noisy equipment (or anything else that disturbs you) to staff as soon as possible so your ward team can try to resolve the issue
- Make use of the Rest and Sleep aids available (see below) if you are experiencing difficulty resting or sleeping. Staff can provide items on request (where available)
- Share any ideas you have to help create a restful environment. You can add comments to a patient experience survey during your stay or upon discharge (ask ward staff for a copy), or you can email the Patient Experience team on [patientexperience@uhb.nhs.uk](mailto:patientexperience@uhb.nhs.uk)

## Rest and Sleep aids

The items below may be offered to you (where safe and appropriate) to aid your rest and sleep:

- Eye mask
- Earplugs
- Decaffeinated tea and coffee
- Warm milky drinks
- Herbal teas
- Relaxation exercises (see below)
- Puzzle books – crosswords, word searches
- Mindfulness colouring books/colouring pencils
- Birmingham Hospital Radio – late night love songs 11pm – 2am via Hospedia TVs, UHB Charity provided iPads, or own devices (where available)



## Relaxation

Relaxation is good for everyone, but if you are struggling to rest or sleep relaxation exercises can be particularly helpful. Practising some relaxation exercises before you settle down is a great way to wind down, calm the mind, and prepare for sleep.

## Relaxation techniques

### Deep breathing

- Close your eyes, and try taking deep, slow breaths, making each breath even deeper than the last. Concentrate on breathing slowly in a regular rhythm. Fill up the whole of your lungs with air, without forcing. Imagine you're filling up a bottle, so that your lungs fill from the bottom
- Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth
- Breathe in slowly and regularly counting from one to five (don't worry if you can't reach five at first)
- Then let the breath escape slowly, counting from one to five

## Information for Patients

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- Keep doing this until you feel calm. Breathe without pausing or holding your breath
- Practice this relaxed breathing for three to five minutes

### Deep muscle relaxation

Close your eyes and begin by focusing on your breathing; breathing slowly and deeply, as described above.

If you have pain in certain muscles, or if there are muscles that you find it difficult to focus on, spend more time on relaxing other parts.

You may find it easier doing the following exercises lying on your back, but don't worry if you can't, just find a comfortable position.

For each exercise, hold the stretch for a few seconds, then relax. Repeat this a couple of times. It's useful to keep to the same order as you work through the muscle groups:

- **Face:** push the eyebrows together as though frowning, then release
- **Neck:** gently tilt the head forwards. Pushing your chin down towards your chest then slowly lift again
- **Shoulders:** pull them up towards the ear (shrug) then relax them down towards the feet
- **Chest:** breathe slowly and deeply into the diaphragm (below your bottom rib) so that you're using the whole of your lungs. Then breathe slowly out, allowing the stomach to deflate as all the air is exhaled
- **Arms:** stretch the arms away from the body, pull them towards your body, then relax
- **Wrists and hands:** stretch the wrist by pulling the hand up towards you, stretch out the fingers and thumbs, then relax

Spend some time lying quietly after your relaxation with your eyes closed.

### For more information, contact Patient Experience on:

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