

CARING FOR SOMEONE WHO HAS SLEEP PROBLEMS



A good night's sleep gives the body and brain time to rest and recuperate helping you to feel refreshed and ready for a new day. But when you are caring for someone who has sleep problems chances are your sleep is being affected too.

There are many types of sleep disorders including insomnia (difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep), narcolepsy (extreme tiredness with involuntary napping during the day) and sleep apnoea (where the upper airway is blocked causing breathing to stop for a time during sleep).

Many of these symptoms are associated with medical conditions such as Alzheimer's, anxiety, depression and autism spectrum disorder. Some symptoms can be a side effect of a medication which is treating an underlying medical condition.

It is estimated that over 1.2 million Australians (6% of the population) experience sleep disorders.¹

TREATING SLEEP DISORDERS

Some sleep disorders may be managed by treating the underlying medical condition. Other specific treatments include specialised sleep clinics, relaxation training, behavioural/ psychotherapeutic treatments, and medications.

Talk to your GP about possible treatments and support for the person you care for. See the 'Quick Tips' to the right, for some ideas to help you, and the person you care for, to get a better night's sleep.

WHEN ONLY A BREAK WILL DO

Treating a sleep disorder (or an underlying condition) may take a long time. Sometimes a period of respite may be the only way you can catch up on your own sleep. You might consider asking another family member to take over the caring role for a night, or find out what types of community respite options are available.

It is important to acknowledge that your health and wellbeing is important to building the resilience and capacity to cope with caring.

Contact the [Carer Advisory Line on 1800 514 845](tel:1800514845) for advice and information about supports and services to help you.

QUICK TIPS

Here are some strategies for getting a restful night's sleep for you and the person you care for.

- **Develop a regular sleep routine.**
This means getting to bed (and waking) at a set time every day.
- **Create a cosy bedroom environment** that is quiet, at the right temperature and with dim lighting.
- **Are your mattress and pillow comfortable?**
Is your bedding and nightwear comfortable?
- **Don't go to bed with an empty stomach** and don't eat or drink within two hours of bedtime.
- **Exercise** is great for general health and for tiring you out - but not too close to bedtime.
- **Several hours before bedtime cut out all stimulants:** alcohol, coffee (and other caffeinated drinks), cigarettes, television (and any other screens).
- **Find out what relaxes you.** A glass of warm milk or herbal tea? A warm bath? Essential oils or soothing music?

Contact the [Carer Advisory Line for more information 1800 514 845.](tel:1800514845)

1. Access Economics (2004) Wake up Australia: the value of healthy sleep. Sleep Health Australia.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

See our flyer '[Carers Who Have Sleep Problems](#)'.