

What to Do for Sleep Problems

Many people with cancer have trouble sleeping. But sleep is key to good physical and mental health, and for your mood and well-being. Because of this, having a good sleep routine or good sleep hygiene is important.



Common sleep problems for people with cancer

- Feeling the need to rest and sleep more
- Having trouble getting to sleep or staying asleep (insomnia)
- Getting too much sleep, which might affect what you can do during the day
- Taking too many naps during the day, which might affect your sleep at night
- Being too hot or cold, needing to use the bathroom, sleep-walking, nightmares, or sleep terrors.

Sleep changes may be temporary, or they may last months to years after cancer treatment.

Trouble sleeping can affect many parts of your life.

It might make it hard for you to:

- Take care of yourself and your family.
- Enjoy social activities or hobbies.



What causes sleep problems?

- Certain surgeries, radiation therapy, hormone therapy, or other medicines used to treat cancer
- Medicines for cancer and non-cancer conditions
- Side effects of cancer, cancer treatment, or medicines, such as:
 - Fatigue
 - Pain

- Anxiety and worrying
- Depression
- Fever
- Nausea or vomiting
- Heartburn
- Leg cramps
- Night sweats or hot flashes
- Shortness of breath



Tips to improve your sleep

- Keep a sleep diary. Tracking your sleep and wake times, patterns, and naps might give you clues about what is causing your sleep problems. A person who is with you at home or during the night can help describe these, too.
- Go to sleep and get up at the same time each day.
- Try to exercise at least once a day. Even a short walk might help.
- Avoid caffeine for 6 to 8 hours before bedtime – longer if it affects your sleep.
- Avoid alcohol.
- Use a quiet setting for rest at the same time each day.
- Take short daytime naps if needed (less than an hour) to decrease the effect on your nighttime sleep.
- Keep sheets clean, tucked in, and as free from wrinkles as you can.
- Create a bedtime routine, like reading or taking a warm bath.



Talk to your cancer care team.

Tell your cancer care team about your sleep problems. Your team will ask you questions about your sleep habits to try and find out what is causing the problems. They will want to know

when you notice the changes, what you have trouble with, or things that make your sleep worse or better. This will help the cancer care team find the cause of your sleep problems and help come up with a plan to improve your sleep.

For cancer information and answers, visit the American Cancer Society website at [cancer.org](https://www.cancer.org) or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

