

MS Essentials Tips



SLEEP & MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS

Many people with multiple sclerosis have sleep difficulties – either falling asleep, sleeping uninterrupted throughout the night, or waking up early. A good night's sleep is very important to your overall health and well-being. Poor-quality sleep can worsen your MS symptoms and is often a warning sign of an underlying issue that needs to be resolved – either by addressing the physical or psychological problem or by improving your sleeping habits.

Many MS symptoms, such as pain, muscle tightness (spasticity), and bowel/bladder problems can make sleep difficult. Talk to your family doctor, neurologist or MS clinic nurse if you are experiencing any of these problems. Better control of your MS symptoms with medications or lifestyle changes will improve the quality of your sleep.

10 Tips for improving the quality of your sleep

- 1 Establish a regular sleep routine** – go to bed and wake up at the same times every day. Try taking a warm (not hot) bath in the evening.
- 2 Limit daytime nap times to 30 minutes.** A short nap can be very helpful if you have MS fatigue, but you may not feel sleepy at bedtime if you take longer naps.
- 3 Make your bedroom conducive to sleep** – it's easier to fall asleep if your room is cool, dark and quiet. A cool bedroom is especially important if you're experiencing hot flashes. Use a humidifier in the winter if the room is dry and your sheets/clothes have static. Use a “white noise” device (e.g. a fan or humidifier) to mask noise.
- 4 Bedrooms are for sleeping** – do not read, watch TV or use your cell phone/laptop/tablet in bed.
- 5 Do not use your electronic devices for 90 minutes before bedtime** to give your brain a chance to wind down.
- 6 Avoid strenuous exercise for 3-4 hours before bedtime.** Physical activity during the day can tire you out and help you sleep at night, but night-time exercise can leave you feeling activated and awake.
- 7 Avoid heavy meals and alcohol for 3-4 hours before bedtime** – a full stomach can make it harder to fall asleep. Rich, fried or fatty foods or spicy meals can cause indigestion and make sleep difficult. Alcohol can make it easier to fall asleep, but it will disrupt your sleep in the middle of the night and leave you feeling unrested in the morning.
- 8 Do not consume caffeine (coffee, tea, carbonated drinks) after mid-afternoon** – caffeine can leave you feeling jittery and more alert.
- 9 Keep track of your fluid intake in the evening.** Limit fluids for a few hours before bedtime, especially if you are waking up in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom.
- 10 Try relaxation techniques,** such as deep-breathing exercises, muscle relaxation techniques or creative visualization.