

First published: November 2011
 Date last reviewed: March 2018
 Date next review due: March 2020
 Leaflet code: UCLH/NHNN/SC/SHA/PIL03
 © University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

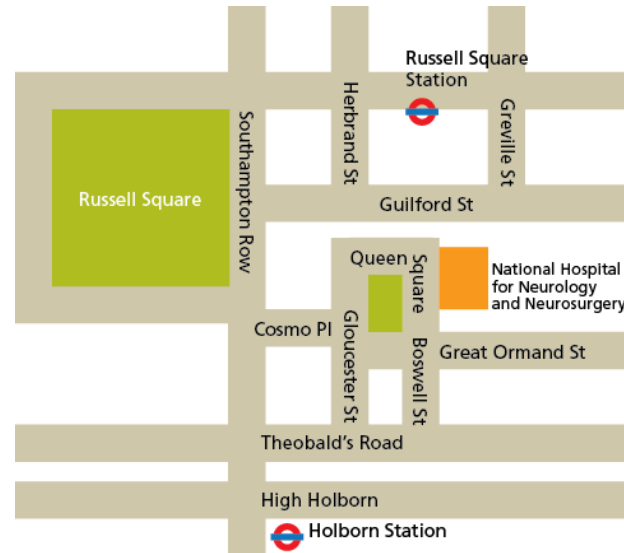
Contact details

Sleep Neurology Clinic
 National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery
 Box 29
 Queen Square
 London
 WC1N 3BG

Direct Line: 020 3448 8623
 Switchboard: 0845 155 5000 / 020 3456 7890
 Extension: 88623
 Fax: 020 3448 8615

Website: www.uclh.nhs.uk/

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this document, please contact us on 020 3448 8623. We will try our best to meet your needs.



National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery

Sleep hygiene (good sleep habits)

Sleep Neurology Services



This leaflet has been written by Dr Eriksson and Prof Walker to provide patients, their family or carers with information about sleep hygiene.

“Sleep hygiene” is another term for good sleep habits that may help you fall asleep at night. Below are some suggestions that you may find helpful. Do not feel you have to do all changes immediately and at the same time!

- ✓ Try to have more regular sleep times. It is probably more important to have a fixed time of getting up in the morning than a fixed bed time to avoid going to bed when you are not sleepy as this may make it more difficult to fall asleep.
- ✓ Avoid napping during the day. Sleeping a lot during the day will affect your ability to go to sleep at night. If you do need a nap, try to limit it to 15 minutes. This should also prevent you going into deep sleep from which it is usually more difficult to wake up.
- ✓ Switch off your mobile phone or if you are using it to check time, put it on airplane or similar mode to avoid receiving calls or messages that can disturb your sleep.
- ✓ Avoid alcohol in the four hours before going to bed. Even though alcohol may

make it easier to fall asleep, the effect will wear off during the night making it more difficult to stay asleep resulting in disrupted overnight sleep and early awakening.

- ✓ Avoid caffeine four to six hours before bedtime. Remember, this includes many soft drinks and chocolate as well as tea and coffee.
- ✓ Exercise regularly, but not just before bedtime. Strenuous exercise within two hours of going to bed may make it more difficult to fall asleep.
- ✓ Make sure you sleep in a comfortable bed
- ✓ Find a comfortable temperature for your bedroom
- ✓ Reserve the bed for sleep; do not use the bedroom as an office, workroom or recreational room.
- ✓ Do not watch television in bed.
- ✓ Avoid looking at you bedside clock to see how long you have been awake or the time it is taking for you to fall asleep. Turn it to face the other way.
- ✓ Try to establish a bedtime routine such as a warm bath or a few minutes’ reading.

- ✓ Practice relaxation techniques before bed such as deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, relaxation tapes or yoga.
- ✓ Do not take your worries to bed. You may find it useful to assign a “worry period” during the evening to deal with problems, or create a “worry diary” to write down problems which you can deal with later.

If you do not fall asleep within 15-20 minutes or if you wake up in the middle of the night and cannot go back to sleep within 15-20 minutes, then get up instead of remaining in bed “trying hard” to go to sleep. Leave the bedroom. Try reading for a little while, have a light snack or do some quiet activity.

Do not attempt any activities which will make you more alert such as household chores, office work, watching television, using your mobile phone or work/play on the computer. When you are feeling tired, go back to bed and try to fall asleep. If you are still not sleeping after 15-20 minutes, get up again until you feel tired.