

TIPS FOR SURGERY, PAIN AND SLEEP

Sleep is vital in recovering from injury, pain or surgery. Without sleep, recovery may take longer. A vicious cycle can happen as without sleep, pain can seem/become much worse. However, pain can also stop someone getting the rest they need.

If you care for someone with chronic pain and sleep issues or experience it yourself, here are some points that might help:

- Be reassured things will improve. It is normal for sleep to be disrupted with injury and pain and post-surgery. This often improves after a couple of weeks. A mix of pain, medication, and change in routine can all impact sleep. Time is a healer and things should slowly get back on track.
- Comfort is essential. Consider whether the bed is supportive. Are the pillows suitable? It's important to be comfortable in bed to help recovery.
- Try different positions. This is important for comfort post-surgery and to help get better sleep. Many people find bed pillow wedges and body pillows effective. Trial what works for you.
- Environment. The optimum room temperature for sleep is 16-18 degrees. It needs to be dark and quiet throughout the night. Those on-site post-surgery will have different needs. A small nightlight may be useful to help with confusion or anxiety. If you are sensitive to light and noise, it's worth having a sleep mask and ear plugs.
- Stick to pain medication and take it as prescribed. It needs to be taken at the optimum time to support sleep. Remember that pain medication is unlikely to make it go away completely. It can get it to a tolerable/manageable level. This is important especially after surgery.
- Learning relaxation methods can be effective for pain management and sleep. Try breathing techniques such as the 4,7,8 technique or mindfulness. You could listen to soothing music, calm audio books or meditation podcasts.
- There may be a need to sleep in the day for recovery. This is normal. If possible, try to nap earlier in the day. Stick to either a short power nap (20-30 minutes) or aim for a full 90-minute sleep cycle.
- Staying active and reducing rest time is helpful for managing pain and improving sleep. You can do this little and often. Plan physiotherapy for the day.
- Reduce the time spent in bed during recovery. It can be helpful to have a separate resting place during the day. This avoids "nesting" in bed. This can create negative associations with bed and sleep and reduces the feelings of needing to sleep at bedtime.

For more information and advice, visit The Sleep Charity at thesleepcharity.org.uk or contact us on info@thesleepcharity.org.uk