

## What is it?

People nearing the end of their lives may have trouble sleeping. There are many reasons why sleep disturbances occur. Sleep disturbances can be a symptom of the disease getting worse. People may also have trouble sleeping due to pain, depression, anxiety or the emotional weight of their disease.

Sleep disturbances can add to the disease's burden. But many patients don't talk about their sleep issues.

Your palliative care team will support you if you are having sleep disturbances. It is important to talk to your team about treatment options. Treating your sleep disturbances will help improve your quality of life while living with a terminal illness.

## What will my healthcare team do?

Your GP may provide tips to help you learn to manage your sleep problems. They may also help you learn about good sleep habits, including:

- Maintain good [sleep hygiene](#) (going to bed and waking up at the same time each day)
- Only use your bed for sleeping and sex
- Avoid or reduce naps during the day
- Avoid or reduce looking at screens before bed time
- Use deep breathing to help you relax
- Avoid caffeine after 3pm, alcohol and smoking

Your GP may also talk to you about your physical health and treat any symptoms that may be making it hard for you to sleep (like itching, pain, soreness).

Sometimes, medications can make it hard for you to fall asleep and stay asleep. Your GP may check your medications to see if they are causing side effects affecting your sleep. Your GP will check in with you often to talk about your sleep patterns. Your GP may prescribe medication if the issue persists.

## What questions could I ask my doctor?

- What can I do to sleep better at night?*
- What should I do if I can't get to sleep?*
- Who can I talk to if I'm struggling to cope?*



## What can I do?

Follow your GP's advice. Herbal or natural remedies may also help.

## What supports are available?

There are palliative care clinics in all of the South Western Sydney local hospitals.

There is also community palliative care nursing and PEACH programs (home support packages). These services can come to your home. Your GP can refer you.

## Where can I learn more?

- **Australian Department of Health & Ageing** – Palliative Care Publication: [health.gov.au](http://health.gov.au)
- **Cancer Council NSW** – Understanding Palliative Care: [cancerCouncil.com.au](http://cancerCouncil.com.au)
- **CarersNSW**: [carersnsw.org.au](http://carersnsw.org.au)
- **Caresearch Palliative Care Knowledge Network**: [caresearch.com.au](http://caresearch.com.au)