

# Sleep During Cancer Treatment

If you have had trouble sleeping during or after cancer treatment, you are not alone. Up to half of cancer patients do not sleep well at some point, according to the National Cancer Institute. Trouble sleeping, also referred to as “sleep disturbance,” includes insomnia, restless legs syndrome (RLS), and fragmented sleep.

## Why Sleep is Important

While getting a good night’s sleep is important to everyone’s health, proper sleep is even more crucial when you are battling cancer. A restful night of sleep lowers blood pressure, improves your ability to solve problems, and balances your hormones. Hormones, in turn, regulate your immune system and repair damaged tissues and cells, which helps give your body the energy it needs to recover from your cancer treatments.

Establishing a regular, relaxing bedtime routine and rituals can improve your sleep. Relaxing rituals prior to bedtime may include a warm bath or shower, aromatherapy, reading, or listening to soothing music. Try to go to bed and get up around the same time each day, including the weekends.

Use your bed only for sleep. This will help you associate your bed with sleep and not other activities like paying bills, talking on the phone, and watching TV.

Here are some other tips for a restful night’s sleep.

- Avoid large meals and beverages late at night. A light snack is OK, but a large meal can cause indigestion that interferes with sleep.
- Get regular exercise each day. This includes stretching and aerobic exercise.
- Get regular exposure to outdoor or bright lights, especially in the late afternoon.
- Keep the temperature in your bedroom comfortable.
- Keep the bedroom dark and quiet enough to facilitate sleep.
- Limit alcohol and caffeine.
- Keep your hands and feet warm. Wear warm socks to bed.

If you continue to have trouble sleeping, see a doctor. Your family doctor or a sleep specialist should be able to help you and it is important to rule out other health problems that may be disturbing your sleep.