

Difficulty Sleeping?

About half of cancer patients have some sleep-related problems, difficulty sleeping is known as insomnia. Sleep problems include being unable to fall asleep and/or stay asleep and are common among people being treated for cancer.

Try to identify the cause of your sleep problems:

- Are you in pain?
- Are you worried about something?
Are you drinking too much caffeine?
- Are you having to get up frequently to go to the bathroom at night?
- Are you napping during the day?
- Are you feeling depressed or anxious?

There are things you can do to help yourself sleep better. See suggestions to the right.

If your lack of sleep is concerning to you, share your sleep experience and patterns with your health care provider.

Prepare for your visit by keeping a sleep diary. Chart the times you are asleep and awake. When your problems started; how they make you feel during the night and during the day.

Content adapted from websites below.

Ways to Manage Sleep Problems

There are steps that you can take to help you sleep well again.

- Set good bedtime habits, commonly called “sleep hygiene”.
- Go to bed only when sleepy, in a quiet and dark room, and in a comfortable bed.
- If you do not fall asleep, get out of bed and return to bed when you are sleepy again. Repeat if you are unable to fall asleep.
- Stop watching television or using other electrical devices a couple of hours before going to bed.
- Don’t drink or eat a lot before bedtime.
- Avoid too much caffeine or caffeine later in the day.
- While it’s important to keep active during the day with regular exercise, exercising a few hours before bedtime may make sleep more difficult.

Steps that you and your health care team can take to help you sleep well again.

- Tell your doctor about problems that interfere with sleep. Getting treatment to lower side effects such as pain or bladder or gastrointestinal problems may help you sleep better.
- Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and relaxation therapy may help. Practicing these therapies can help you to relax. For example, a CBT therapist can help you learn to change negative thoughts and beliefs about sleep into positive ones. Strategies such as muscle relaxation, guided imagery, and self-hypnosis may also help you.
- Sleep medicine may be prescribed. Your doctor may prescribe sleep medicine, for a short period if other strategies don’t work. The sleep medicine prescribed will depend on your specific problem (such as trouble falling asleep or trouble staying asleep) as well as other medicines you are taking. If the medicine does not help be sure to let your doctor know so another medication might be considered.

Resources for Additional Information: Recursos en Español:

- [Cancer.Net, Sleeping Problems: Insomnia](#)
- [NIH, Sleep Problems](#)
- [NIH Sleep Disorders \(PDO®\) – Patient Version](#)
- [Chemocare, Sleep Problems](#)
- [American Cancer Society, Sleep Problems](#)
- [CancerCare.org, Coping with Sleep Difficulties During and After Treatment](#)
- [NIH, Instituto Nacional Del Cáncer, Problemas para dormir](#)
- [Cancer.Net, Problemas del sueño: hipersomnia, síndrome de somnolencia o pesadillas](#)
- [Cancer.Net, Problemas del sueño: Insomnio](#)
- [American Cancer Society, Problemas para dormir](#)
- [Chemocare, Problemas del sueño](#)
- [CancerCare.org, Técnicas de relajación y prácticas de la mente y el cuerpo: cómo pueden ayudarle a sobrellevar el cáncer](#)