



Don't Lose Sleep Over Parkinson's

As part of Sleep Well Week, we spoke to Lisa Artis Deputy CEO of the sleep charity, about the importance of sleep hygiene. This is what she had to say about the subject.

Sleep hygiene is quite complex subject with lots of different factors involved. Is it really possible for a person to address all those factors? Are there certain things that should take priority?

Absolutely not, I think it's really key that if you are struggling with your sleep that you take a step back and assess what is going wrong before adopting strategies. People are often overwhelmed with the prospect of having to do 10 top tips before bed. We often talk about the three Rs:

- Keeping **regular** hours (going to bed and getting up at the same time all the time),
- having a wind down **routine** before bed and
- keeping a **restful** environment.

These are three key things people can look at and adopt.

People with Parkinson's often suffer from joint pain, or tremors, which gives them an added inconvenience when going to sleep. How important is it to address, what might seem to them, minor sleep hygiene issues when they have bigger struggles to deal with?

Sleep hygiene is about practising good sleep habits which is good to implement as part of a healthy lifestyle. However, people may be doing all the right things to help them sleep but if pain/tremors are hindering sleep then it's important this is addressed first.

Do you have any advice for partners of people who have sleep disturbance?

Around 50% of sleep disturbance is caused by sharing a bed. Having a partner who disturbs your sleep can be challenging and it can leave many couples short tempered with each other leading to rows and squabbles. If you need to sleep separately then do it. Over recent years there's been lots of research into how many couples now sleep apart and how beneficial – or not beneficial – it is for your sleep. And there are a large number of us who do sleep in separate bedrooms – for many reasons whether that's snoring, health or just personal space.

Technical gadgets – smartphones, tablets etc are a key part of life now. The advice is to abandon them before sleep. Do you have any advice as to how much time before you nod off one should stop using them? Ideally we would switch off gadgets an hour before bedtime. This is because they can keep us awake longer as the blue light from these devices has the capacity to prevent the hormones that make us sleepy from being produced. Importantly, it is not just the light that can affect our sleep but most activities that we use our devices for can keep us awake and alert which we don't want to do at bedtime. It has also been proven that it has a knock on effect on the time it takes for us to fall asleep.

Does music relax or stimulate someone who is trying to get to sleep?

Soothing music is great for helping people to relax before bedtime but only if it's something that you enjoy. Try to do activities in an evening that you find relaxing and enjoyable – whether that's listening to music, reading, a warm bath or meditation.

People with Parkinson's often have sleep disturbance caused by medication or their symptoms and it can include nightmares, insomnia, parasomnias and other unpleasant side effects which stops them sleeping. Is there anything that can help insomnia?

Insomnia is a sleep disorder where people have extreme difficulty in getting to sleep or staying asleep for long enough to feel refreshed the next morning. It's a common

problem thought to affect around one in every three people in the UK. Sleep hygiene can help but if insomnia has been present for more than three months, for three nights a week or more, it generally needs more specialised treatment such as cognitive behavioural therapy for insomnia, sleep restriction therapy or stimulus control.

Would you recommend keeping a sleep diary to assess your sleep? Or can that get obsessive – and how does one keep a balance between getting too obsessive about sleep and taking things in one's stride?

You only need to be thinking about completing a sleep diary if you've noticed changes in your sleep patterns. It can be a really useful way of identifying what you are doing/not doing on the days you sleep well and the days you don't. Sometimes your sleep troubles are a result of bad sleep habits for example drinking too much caffeine before bedtime, not exercising or poor sleep hygiene.

Start keeping a sleep diary as soon as you begin to recognise a problem and complete over a two week period. If you need to see a GP or healthcare professional about your sleep issues you will have evidence of your sleep-wake pattern which can help with a diagnosis and treatment.

What's your view of sleep gadgets (for example apps, or things that claim to aid your sleep) Are they worth it? Or should people not get tempted by them.

Unfortunately sleep trackers/apps are not very accurate. While they have been great in making people more aware about their sleep and can be an incentive to improve sleep habits, the data doesn't give a full picture and can cause unnecessary anxiety or concern around someone's sleep. It can mean that people start putting pressure on themselves to sleep better, when they most likely won't or possibly don't even need to! There is even a term for those who obsess over their sleep from trackers called orthosomnia.

You can find more information on sleep hygiene at www.thesleepcharity.org.uk