

# Sleep



Approximately 50% of people who have sustained brain injuries report experience with disturbed sleep patterns or arousal challenges.

Sleep disturbances leading to less restorative sleep include:

- Increased awakenings.
- Decreased sleep efficiency.
- Changes in the amount of time spent in different stages of sleep.
- Difficulty with “sleep inertia”- it takes longer to wake up. (The brainwaves normally seen during sleep continue even after waking and take a longer time to go away.)

## **What can I do to help improve sleep?**

Sleep is essential for thinking, mood regulation and physical functioning. On average, adults require 7-8 hours of sleep each night for optimal function.

For healthy sleep, it is important to do the following:

- Maintain a consistent bedtime and wake routine.
- Get regular exercise.
- Keep your room quiet, cool, and comfortable.
- Have physical / medical concerns addressed by your healthcare team.

It is also essential that the following are avoided to help improve sleep:

- Staying in bed when not tired.
- Using the bed for anything other than sleep or sex. No TV, bill paying, arguing, talking, social media, etc.
- Naps- especially in the afternoon.
- Caffeine in the afternoon / evening.
- Alcohol - prevents the body from reaching the deeper restoring stages of sleep.

## **What can my physician or healthcare provider assist with?**

- Your physician/healthcare provider may wish to consider a trial of sleep aids (e.g., Trazodone), balancing side effects, medical issues, and effectiveness of the potential medications.
- Your physician/healthcare provider may also order a sleep study (polysomnography) or overnight oxygen monitoring to determine if there are any other abnormalities, where the airway becomes blocked and there are periods of poor breathing at night.

Families and loved ones can help by recording sleep logs to look at changes that occur with different strategies used to improve sleep.

For more information on sleep, please visit:

<http://www.msktc.org/tbi/factsheets/Sleep-And-Traumatic-Brain-Injury>

General sleep hygiene tips can also be found at:

<http://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/docs/Info-sleep%20hygiene.pdf>

Reference:

Zafonte R, Katz D, Zasler N. *Brain Injury Medicine, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition: Principles and Practice*. New York: Demos Medical; 2013.