

# Sleep and Musculoskeletal Pain

## Patient Information Leaflet

MSK Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Service



View our other **MSK Physiotherapy** resources

[www.leicspart.nhs.uk/msk-physiotherapy-resources-getting-started/](http://www.leicspart.nhs.uk/msk-physiotherapy-resources-getting-started/)

## Why is sleep important?

Many things help you stay healthy. Exercise, eating well and getting enough sleep are three of the most important.

When you sleep, your body works hard to:

- repair and restore muscles and tissues
- control the hormones that influence healing and inflammation
- support your immune system
- keep good energy levels, mood and concentration.

Good sleep helps the body and mind, which helps with your quality of life. Most people feel best with about 7–9 hours of sleep each night, but everyone is different.

It's not only about how long you sleep. Good quality sleep is just as important. This means you wake up feeling rested and ready for the day.

## How does sleep affect pain?

Sleep and pain are closely linked. When you don't sleep well you may:

- feel more pain
- get tired more quickly
- do less during the day
- take longer to recover
- gain weight over time

This can lead to an unhelpful cycle of:



You don't need perfect sleep to break this cycle. Even small changes can help.

# Practical Ways to Improve Sleep

You don't need to change everything at once. Small steps can make a big difference.

## Exercise regularly

Regular exercise can help you sleep more deeply.

Deep sleep is important for your body and mind.

Exercise guidelines recommend that adults should perform 150 minutes per week of moderate exercise. This means doing something that makes you warm and a little out of breath.

The best form of exercise is something that you enjoy and can perform regularly.

## Think about what you eat and drink

Your food and drink choices can affect your sleep, especially in the evening.

Eat a healthy, balanced diet.

Try not to drink caffeine later in the day.

Try to cut down or stop smoking near bedtime.

Avoid alcohol before bed.

## **Make your bedroom a good place to sleep**

Your sleep environment matters.

Keep the room quiet or use earplugs.

Keep the room dark or use an eye mask.

Keep your room cool and well ventilated.

Use a comfortable pillow and mattress.

Keep your bedroom for sleep only – not for eating, drinking, watching TV or scrolling on your phone.

## **Wind down before bed**

Help your brain get ready for bed.

Have a calm bedtime routine.

Try to address any worries or stress earlier in the evening to not impact your sleep.

Do something relaxing before bed, like reading or listening to calm music.

## **Keep a steady routine**

Your body likes a regular pattern.

Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day.

Try not to sleep in, even at weekends.

Avoid napping in the evening.

## **Manage light during the day and night**

Light helps control your body's sleep-wake cycle (this is your body's natural internal 24-hour clock that tells you when to be awake and alert, and when to feel sleepy and rest).

Avoid bright screens for at least an hour before bed.

Dim the lights in the evening.

Spend more time outdoors during the day.

Try to get natural light soon after waking up.

### **If you can't sleep:**

- Try not to lie in bed worrying about it.
- Try slow counting in your head.

If you still cannot sleep after about 30 minutes, get out of bed and do something calm, like reading until you feel sleepy again.

## Final Thoughts

Sleep is important for your health and wellbeing. Many things can affect how well you sleep, but small changes can help over time. If you keep having problems with your sleep, speak to a healthcare professional.

If you need help to understand this leaflet or would like it in a different language or format such as large print, Braille or audio, please ask a member of staff.



## MSK Physiotherapy Service

Find out more about the MSK Physiotherapy Service and what we offer

[www.leicspart.nhs.uk/service/musculoskeletal-msk-therapy-physiotherapy/](http://www.leicspart.nhs.uk/service/musculoskeletal-msk-therapy-physiotherapy/)



## Further Resources

Access our other MSK Physiotherapy resources [www.leicspart.nhs.uk/msk-](http://www.leicspart.nhs.uk/msk-physiotherapy-resources-getting-started/)

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