

People with Cerebral Palsy need a good night's sleep!

Research has shown that most adults need between 7 and 8 hours sleep each night.

Sleep is essential for good health and well being.

Everyone needs good sleep for:

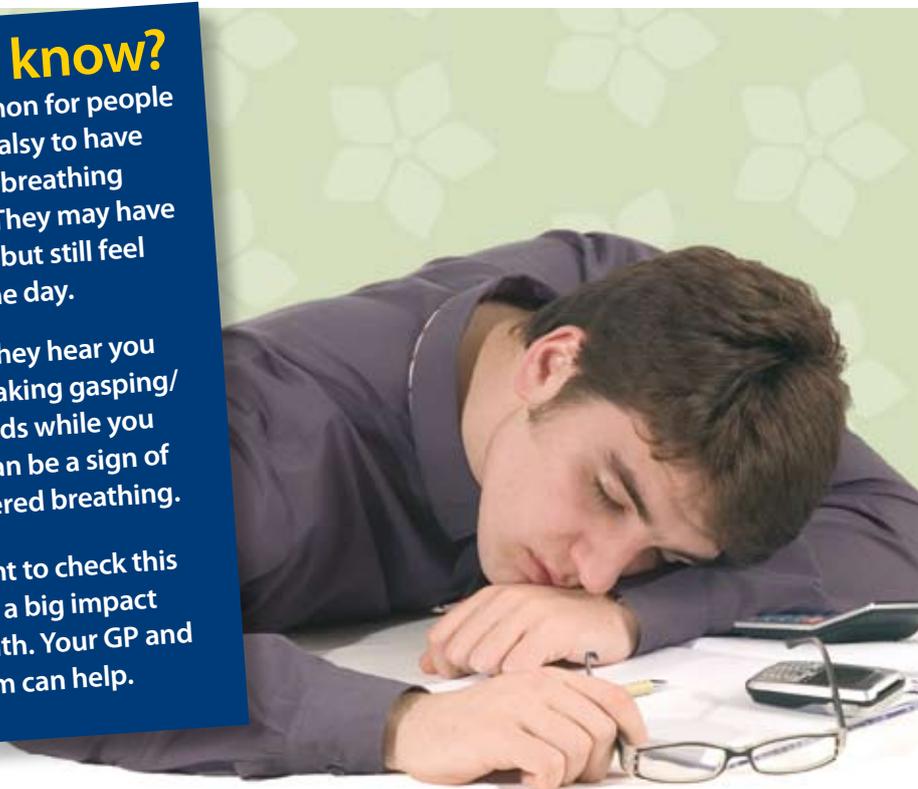
- general health
- energy for daily activities
- mood and well being
- social and family interaction
- memory and learning
- attention and concentration

Did you know?

It is quite common for people with cerebral palsy to have problems with breathing during sleep. They may have slept all night, but still feel tired during the day.

Ask others if they hear you snoring, or making gasping/choking sounds while you sleep – this can be a sign of sleep disordered breathing.

It is important to check this out, as it has a big impact on your health. Your GP and therapy team can help.



If you have Cerebral Palsy you may have sleep problems for a variety of reasons

These might include:

- pain and discomfort due to muscle spasm, body position, pressure, temperature/perspiration, uncontrolled movements
- problems with breathing and swallowing or digestion during sleep
- behaviours or habits that interfere with getting to sleep and staying asleep
- medical conditions (such as epilepsy) and medications for these
- difficulty managing your sleep environment such as adjusting lights or music, moving in bed, or adjusting the sheets and blankets

There is help available for your sleep problems.

Everyone is different, but the following might help:

- adjusting your daily / evening routines
- special equipment to help keep you comfortable
- special beds and bedding
- medication
- seeking help from specialists for specific problems (eg speech pathologist, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, dietician, orthopaedic surgeon, neurologist, respiratory physician, socialwork, psychologist, nurse, dentist and GP)

The 'Sleep Solutions Team' at The Centre for Cerebral Palsy can help to bring these solutions together.

Sleep Solutions for people with Cerebral Palsy

Routine



A calming routine before bed allows time for you to relax and prepare for sleep. Too much activity in the last hour before bedtime can make it hard to fall asleep. Research has shown that it helps to avoid intense computer use, heavy exercise and rich food or drink in this time. It is important to keep your sleep and wake time consistent each day – including the weekends. Sleeping in on Saturday and Sunday changes your body clock – making it harder to fall asleep at a reasonable time during the week. Think about what time you need to be up in the morning and plan for 7 – 8 hours sleep a night.

Food & Drink



A healthy diet full of fresh fruit, vegetables, complex carbohydrates and protein will assist with your ability to fall asleep and stay asleep. Avoid caffeine in food and drinks from midday onwards. Some people with cerebral palsy have difficulty with eating and drinking making them thirsty or hungry at night. Your sleep may also be disturbed by reflux, constipation or needing to go to the toilet too often. You may want to talk to your GP or therapy team about this.

Sunlight Exposure



Time spent outside with exposure to sunlight is essential to regulating your body clock and assisting with sleep. Simply being outdoors for a while each morning can make a difference. Speak to your therapy team for a referral to Sleep Solutions if you need more information.

Physical Exercise



Exercising each day will help you sleep at night time. Avoid exercise late in the evening as this may make it harder for you to fall asleep. Ask your physiotherapist to help you find exercise activities that suit your interests and abilities.

Postural Management



Pain, pressure, posture, surgery and muscle spasm may affect your ability to sleep. A trial of night time positioning equipment can be arranged through Sleep Solutions and information can be provided on good sleep positioning, specialist beds and bedding. Contact your GP if you would like to discuss medications that can help with pain and spasm.

Bedroom Environment



Make your bedroom an inviting and relaxing place to sleep. Think about the levels of temperature, comfort, light and noise that suit you best.

There are special switches and controls that would make it easier for you to manage your environment such as turning on and off the light and radio. Research has shown that you should not use televisions and computers in your bedroom if you are having trouble getting to sleep.

General Health



Allergies, colds, other general health conditions and medications may all play a role in your ability to get to sleep and stay asleep. These need to be addressed individually. Talk to your GP or specialist about these issues.

Stress



Study, work deadlines, and stresses of day to day life, can play on your mind and make it difficult to fall asleep. Have a pen and paper next to your bed to write down any ideas that you are thinking about rather than trying to remember them until morning. Look at learning a relaxation or meditation technique so that you are not taking your worries to bed!