

Sleep For TBI Survivors and Their Caregivers



Sleep is defined as a state of rest characterized by limited bodily activity and an unconscious state. There are many benefits of sleep:

- Physiological Repair
- Immunity
- Supports productivity and performance



- Memory processing
- Maintenance of healthy body weight
- Decreases stress and improves mood

Sleep and Traumatic Brain Injury

If you or a loved one has a TBI, you already know that good sleep can be very challenging. Unfortunately, poor sleep is both common and problematic for TBI survivors. It can:

- Lead to poorer performance on cognitive tests following the TBI
- Lead to chronic fatigue
- Lead to depression and anxiety



Did You Know?

Sleep problems following a TBI are likely caused by:

- Imbalance of sleep-related hormones
- Damage to the sleep centers of the brain
- Side-effect of another consequence of the TBI, like depression or anxiety

Sleep For Caregivers

Up to 76% of caregivers of TBI survivors reported poor sleep quality. This was especially true for female caregivers. The most common causes involved night-time awakenings and hyper-alertness; cumulative sleep loss; napping in the day to “catch up,” and stress and anxiety.

Consequences Of Poor Sleep

- Impaired Immunity
- Difficulty concentrating, learning, and remembering
- Irritability and mood swings
- Increased risk for chronic illness
- Increased risk for physical injury

Could Affect Your Ability To

- Physically care for your loved one
- Problem solve when faced with a difficult care situation
- Safely prepare and administer medications without distraction
- Financially provide for both your loved one and yourself if you develop a chronic illness

Strategies For Improving Sleep



Ask For Help!

Be sure to share with your loved one's doctor the issues he/she is having with sleep and with your own doctor if you are having issues with sleep.

Develop A Good Sleep Hygiene Routine!

- Keep a consistent sleep schedule - Get up at the same time every day, even on weekends. Set a bedtime that is early enough to give you at least 7 hours of sleep.
- Establish a relaxing bedtime routine.
- Limit daytime naps and if you must nap, set an alarm to keep it short.
- Don't eat large meals before bedtime.
- Exercise regularly and maintain a healthy diet; avoid caffeine and alcohol in the late afternoon and evening.
- Reduce fluid intake before bedtime.



Develop A Good Sleep Hygiene Environment!

- Use your bed only for sleep and sex.
- Make your bedroom quiet and relaxing.
- Keep the room between 60-70 degrees.
- Limit exposure to bright light in the evenings.
- Turn off electronic devices at least 30 minutes before bedtime.



Use Over-the-Counter sleep aids with caution, and only after consulting with your doctor!

Consider Sleep in context! Sleep is only ONE part of the puzzle!

**The information contained on this information sheet is provided courtesy the research and work of Dr. Rachael Mumbower, PhD, RN*

Please visit www.ahif.org or call the AHIF office at (800) 433-8002 to confirm the appropriate AHIF Resource Coordinator for your location.