

# Sleep Problems Management

There are a variety of factors that may contribute to people having difficulty sleeping during chemotherapy treatments. Chemotherapy can cause patients to feel tired and sleepy, which may lead to napping or sleeping during the day and that leads to difficulty sleeping at night or through the night. Sometimes other medications such as Decadron prescribed to combat side effects of the chemotherapy can lead to sleep problems, as well as stress and tension of the cancer and the treatment.

## Follow these guidelines to help overcome difficulty sleeping at night:

- Make the room dark and quiet. Try earplugs if needed.
- Go to bed only when you are sleepy and planning to sleep. Don't stay in bed for longer than 20 minutes if you can't fall asleep. Move to another room and stay there until sleepy, and then return to your bed. Do this as many times as needed until you fall asleep.
- Use the bed only for sleeping (not for watching TV or reading)
- Keep a consistent sleep schedule. Make sure you go to bed each night and wake up each morning at the same time even on days that you are not working.
- Minimize daytime naps. If you must take a nap, do not sleep for more than an hour at a time. Longer naps will make you feel more tired, and may contribute to sleep problems.
- Decrease your caffeine intake and avoid drinking caffeine in the evening.
- Try some mild to moderate exercise during the day. For example, take a twenty- minute walk most days of the week. Exercise will help keep you up during the day; helps relieve stress, improve your mood, and oftentimes will help alleviate sleep problems.
- Do not eat or exercise within 2 hours of bedtime, or watch TV within 1 hour of bedtime.
- If pain is causing difficulty sleeping, make sure you are taking prescribed medications as recommended. If this is not helping your pain, talk with your health care provider.
- If you are worried or anxious about your cancer, try becoming involved with a support group and/or to listen to relaxing music or partake in activities that help you feel less tense.
- If you are taking the anti-nausea medication dexamethasone (Decadron<sup>®</sup>), take it before five or six o'clock in the evening.
- Some over-the-counter remedies may be helpful such as diphenhydramine (Benedryl<sup>®</sup>), Simply Sleep by Tylenol<sup>®</sup>, or acetaminophen with diphenhydramine (Tylenol PM<sup>®</sup>). As with any medication, you should check with your health care provider before taking any medications.

## When to call your health care provider:

- If you are having unrelieved pain, anxiety or depression that is causing difficulty sleeping.
- If sleep problems continue despite trying the above sleep management strategies.