



# Tourette syndrome and sleep

Many children and young people with Tourette syndrome have problems with sleep. This information sheet from Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) explains the link between Tourette syndrome and sleep and gives some suggestions for some things you can try to improve sleep.

Sleep problems affecting people with Tourette syndrome can include generally poor sleep quality, waking, bad dreams, sleep-walking and talking, and nightmares. Around 80 per cent of people with Tourette syndrome have sleep-related problems, which is more than children and young people in the general population.

Some of the medications you take for tics or other issues might also have an effect on your sleep. If you have another condition such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or anxiety, there is a chance that your sleep difficulties could be related to this condition so it is worth discussing this with your clinical team.

Not getting enough sleep may impact on your daily life:

- Feeling anxious about not sleeping
- Poor memory and concentration the following day
- Short temper and irritability leading to behaviour problems

The rest of your family can suffer too – getting up during the night might disturb their sleep too!



## Things to try

Here are a few simple steps to try in the first instance:

- Do a bit of exercise in the late afternoon – walk home from school rather than take the bus, play a game in the garden or park, or go for a swim.
- Check your bedroom is dark enough to sleep – you can get ‘blackout’ lining for your curtains if streetlights shine in through the window.
- Avoid food or drinks containing caffeine within six hours of bedtime – this includes hot chocolate, coffee, tea (except for some herbal teas) or cola drinks.
- Keep to a routine – wake up and go to bed at the same time each day, whether a weekday or at the weekend or holidays.
- If you have a bad night’s sleep, try not to make up for it by napping the following day – this will just break your routine and leave you playing ‘catch up’.
- Avoid screen time in the hour before bed and leave tablet computers, mobile phones and televisions outside the bedroom.
- Develop a bedtime routine and stick to it!
  - Have a warm (not hot) bath with some relaxing bubble bath
  - Do a few gentle yoga stretches to relax your muscles
  - Listen to relaxation music or sounds, such as gentle sea or rainforest sounds
  - Read a book or listen to gentle music

## Other things to try

If these suggestions do not help and you are still having problems sleeping, talk to your family doctor (GP) in the first instance. They might suggest referring you on to another healthcare professional to help.

## Sleep diary

You may be asked to keep a sleep diary for a short while to identify any triggers for your bad night's sleep. NHS Choices has a template you can use at [www.nhs.uk/livewell/insomnia/documents/sleepdiary.pdf](http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/insomnia/documents/sleepdiary.pdf). There are various apps and trackers that also monitor quality of sleep, but we suggest keeping a sleep diary first.

If you do want to try an app, have a look at Kids Sleep Dr freely available at [www.kidssleepdr.com/](http://www.kidssleepdr.com/)

## Medication

Some of the medicines used to treat tics can also help with your sleep. For instance, risperidone and clonidine can make you sleepy, which might be helpful if you take them at night. Melatonin is another medication – a man-made version of a naturally occurring hormone – that encourages sleep but again, this should be discussed with your doctor in the first place.

Daily Sleep Diary								
Complete the diary each morning ("Day 1" will be your first morning). Don't worry too much about giving exact answers, an estimate will do.								
Your Name _____		The date of Day 1 _____						
		Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
1	Enter the Weekday (Mon, Tues, Wed, etc.)							
2	At what time did you go to bed last night?							
3	After settling down, how long did it take you to fall asleep?							
4	After falling asleep, about how many times did you wake up in the night?							
5	After falling asleep, for how long were you awake during the night in total?							
6	At what time did you finally wake up?							
7	At what time did you get up?							
8	How long did you spend in bed last night (getting in, to first up)?							
9	How would you quality of your night?							
10	1 2 3 V. Poor							

**10 Rules for Improved Sleep Hygiene**

If you have problems sleeping, then it is important that you practise good Sleep Hygiene. This means doing things which are known to improve sleep, and avoiding those things which are known to disturb sleep. Here are 10 things you should know about getting better sleep; each of these points is based on scientific research, and could help you to get the most out of your sleep.

**Remember, this advice applies only if you have a sleep problem:**

- 1 Products containing caffeine (tea, coffee, cocoa, chocolate, soft drinks, etc.) should be discontinued at least 4 hours before bedtime. Caffeine is a stimulant and can keep you awake.
- 2 Avoid nicotine (including nicotine patches or chewing gum, etc) an hour before bedtime and when waking at night. Nicotine is also a stimulant.
- 3 Avoid alcohol around bedtime because although it can promote sleep at first, it can disrupt sleep later in the night.
- 4 Avoid eating a large meal immediately before bedtime, although a light snack may be beneficial.
- 5 Try to do regular (even mild) physical exercise if you are able, but avoid doing this in the 2 hours before bedtime.
- 6 Keep the bedroom calm and tidy. Select a mattress, sheets, and pillows that are comfortable.
- 7 Avoid making your bedroom too hot or too cold.
- 8 Keep the bedroom quiet and darkened during the night, but try to spend some time in daylight (or bright artificial light) during the day.
- 9 Keep your bedroom mainly for sleeping; try to avoid watching television, listening to the radio, or eating in your bedroom.
- 10 Try to keep regular times for going to bed and getting up.

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