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. 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.kidsleepdr.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.

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### 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>Day 3</th>
<th>Day 4</th>
<th>Day 5</th>
<th>Day 6</th>
<th>Day 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your Name</td>
<td>This Date of Day 1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- **Time you went to bed**
- **Time you woke up**
- **How long did you spend in bed last night?**
- **At what time did you finally fall asleep?**
- **After falling asleep, how long were you awake during the night?**
- **How many times did you wake up in the night?**
- **At what time did you get up?**

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### 10 Rules for Improved Sleep Hygiene

If you have problems sleeping, then it is important that you develop good sleep hygiene.

- **Try to go to bed and get up at the same time, even on weekends.**
- **Don’t make your bedroom a place where you do other activities such as watching TV or doing work.**
- **Keep your bedroom cool, quiet and dark.**
- **Try to keep your bedtime routine consistent.**
- **Limit exposure to bright light at night.**
- **Avoid heavy meals or snacks before bedtime.**
- **Avoid alcohol close to bedtime.**
- **Avoid heavy exercise close to bedtime.**
- **Try to spend some time outside during the day.**
- **Limit caffeine and nicotine (including chewing gum) 4 hours before bedtime.**

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**Compiled by the Tourette syndrome clinic in collaboration with the Child and Family Information Group Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Foundation Trust, Great Ormond Street, London WC1N 3JH**

www.gosh.nhs.uk