

CARERS WHO HAVE SLEEP PROBLEMS

The demands of caring can be relentless and stressful, and many carers will experience sleep problems as a result. But lack of sleep can affect your resilience, making it harder to cope with stress thus creating a vicious cycle.

Some carers provide 24-hour nursing assistance to a family member with high care needs.

The greater the physical and emotional demands of your caring role, the more likely you are to feel stress.

If you are caring for a family member or friend who is experiencing symptoms of sleep disorder, you might find it hard to get a good night's sleep yourself. And if this continues over a long period of time, your own health and wellbeing can suffer.

Caring can be difficult at the best of times; it can feel almost impossible if you are exhausted from lack of sleep. You might find your concentration and judgement is impaired by lack of sleep. You might become irritable and depressed.

Sleep interruption is the most commonly reported effect of caring, impacting on half (51%) of primary carers.¹

Disturbed sleep or insomnia is a common sign that stress levels are too high.

It is important to acknowledge that your health and wellbeing is important to building the resilience and capacity to cope with caring.

See the tips over the page on getting a good night's sleep and then think about getting some help to manage the stresses of your caring role.

To help you last the distance, make sure you access all the support that is available to you.

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics (2009) *Caring in the community*. ABS, Canberra.

QUICK TIPS

When you are caring for someone else you often put your own needs last. These tips are a reminder that your own health and wellbeing is important. Staying strong will help you to better cope with the demands of caring.

- **Eat well** - A nutritious balanced diet will give you the fuel your body needs to keep on caring.
- **Exercise regularly** - Physical exercise can relieve tension and reduce stress levels.
- **Sleep well** - Caring can be exhausting so try and get eight hours sleep every night.
- **Share the care** - Let family members and friends know that their help and support is welcome.
- **Talk it over** - With a friend or family member or with a professional counsellor. Join a Carer Support Group and meet other people to share tips and experiences.
- **Take a break** - Do something that you love... or do nothing but relax and recharge your batteries.

Contact the Carer Advisory Line for more information 1800 514 845.

SUPPORT FOR THE PERSON YOU CARE FOR

It can be frustrating not understanding the symptoms and behaviours of the person you care for. Arming yourself with information can help you (and the person you care for) to feel more in control and confident.

Many carers say that what would help them most is better services for the person they care for. But it can be difficult to know where to begin, or how to find the organisation that offers the support and services your family needs.

Speaking to your family GP is a great place to start. And a good website for general health information is www.healthinsite.gov.au

SUPPORT FOR YOU

Talk to your GP about possible treatments for your sleep problems.

There are also a number of organisations which offer supports and services to help carers to reduce stress and balance their caring role.

Contact the [Carer Advisory Line on 1800 514 845](tel:1800514845) for advice and information about supports and services to help you.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

See our flyer 'Caring For Someone Who Has Sleep Problems'.

