

## **STAYING HEALTHY WITH POSITIVE LIFESTYLE CHANGES**

Adopting a healthy lifestyle is fully part of your treatment for sleep apnoea, so you can make the most of it and enjoy your life to the fullest.

Small changes can make a big difference!

Smoking, obesity, alcohol, certain medications and poor sleep hygiene all have a detrimental effect on your health and all contribute to the symptoms of sleep apnoea. So by looking at ways to modify what you eat and drink – and by losing weight and taking up exercise – you can really make a positive change to your health and wellbeing. These improvements will also boost the efficacy of your CPAP therapy.

In a nutshell, for a healthy lifestyle, you should aim to:

- Eat three balanced meals a day at regular times, seated at a table in a quiet place, and avoid big meals before going to sleep.
- Drink 1.5 to 2 litres of water per day and limit your consumption of alcohol and caffeine-based drinks, such as coffee and energy drinks, especially at the end of the day.
- Exercise regularly.
- Try to quit or reduce smoking
- Adopt a good sleep hygiene.

Easy to say... Let's share some tips to support you in adopting these lifestyle changes:

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### **FOOD**

Avoid eating snacks and junk food. Reduce the number of take-aways you order. And swap your dessert for a healthier snack, like a piece of fruit

Prepare a shopping list before you visit the supermarket (and try to stick to it). And don't go shopping on an empty stomach – you'll be less tempted to buy snacks and chocolate.

Change-up your cooking at home so you eat a variety of food, using seasonal fruit and vegetables. You can find almost any recipe online.

Prepare several meals in advance to save yourself cooking time when you can't face being in the kitchen. This is called 'batch cooking'.

If you adopt a healthy diet, combined with regular exercise, you'll start to lose weight. If you are overweight, it's important to shed a few kilos because this will reduce the severity of your sleep apnoea. Overweight people have extra tissue in the throat, which blocks the flow of air and induces the condition.

It's not easy but it will make a real difference to your body and quality of life. Losing a lot of weight can sometimes cure sleep apnoea.

Although it can be harder for people with sleep apnoea to lose weight – it slows the metabolism, leading to high blood pressure, insulin resistance and glucose intolerance – CPAP treatment will help you sleep better, giving you more energy to begin a weight-loss programme. Treating sleep apnoea will set off a very positive chain reaction.

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## **DRINKS**

When it comes to cutting back on alcohol consumption, you should:

Not drink every day; and when you do, have no more than two glasses.

Try not to drink alone.

Drink a glass of water for each alcoholic drink consumed.

Meet in cafes rather than bars.

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## **STOP SMOKING**

To stop smoking, try to:

Identify the moments you associate with smoking, and then change that ritual. For example, drink tea instead of coffee, and take a 5-minute walk rather than a coffee break.

Keep your hands busy.

Keep your home and car smoke-free.

Put aside the money you save from not smoking and treat yourself to something.

Download an app to help you stop smoking.

Seek professional help if necessary – you're four times more likely to quit when you have expert help.

## **TAKING EXERCISE**

Exercise can improve your quality of life by controlling your weight, boosting your mood, decreasing daytime drowsiness and promoting a better night's sleep.

Regular physical activity can effectively help you fall asleep faster and deepen your sleep, reducing the number of awakenings per hour and decreasing apneic episodes.

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## **ADOPTING A GOOD SLEEP HYGIENE**

'Sleep hygiene' simply means habits that foster getting a good sleep. It includes things such as:

- daily routines, such as getting enough exercise and sunlight
- what you do (and what you avoid) before bedtime
- creating a bedroom environment that's conducive to relaxation.

Everyone, including children, needs enough sleep to function at their best, and sleep hygiene can play a crucial role in achieving that goal.

There are numerous habits that can improve sleep health.

### **Daily routines**

- Be consistent – regular waking and sleeping times, even on weekends, help establish a good sleep rhythm.
- Light exposure – light, especially sunlight, helps regulate your body's circadian rhythms. Aim to get some sunlight every morning, preferably within an hour of waking. The exact amount for most benefit isn't known, but between 30 and 45 minutes is commonly recommended.
- Physical activity – regular exercise promotes sleep. Aim to be physically active every day but avoid exercising too close to bedtime as your body needs time to unwind.
- Quit smoking – nicotine is a stimulant and raises heart rate and blood pressure. Smoking is also linked with sleep disturbance and may be a risk factor for disorders such

as obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA). Even reducing how many cigarettes you smoke each day may help.

- Manage caffeine intake – caffeine is a stimulant, so avoid it later in the day.
- Reduce alcohol consumption – sleep can be disrupted when the effects of alcohol wear off.
- Avoid afternoon naps – these can make it harder to get to sleep later.

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### **Before bedtime**

- Avoid eating late – so your body isn't working to digest food while you're trying to get to sleep. Aim to have your last meal at least two to three hours before bedtime.
- Wind down – limit mental and physical activities at least 30 minutes before bed so your mind and body start to relax. Try gentle stretching, light reading or listening to calming music.
- Turn off electronic devices 30-60 minutes before bed.
- Follow a routine – going through the same steps each night (such as switching off the TV, putting on pyjamas and brushing your teeth) reinforces the fact that it's bedtime.
- Reduce or cut out altogether your consumption of sleeping pills, which can aggravate sleep apnoea.

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### **Your bedroom**

- Ensure your bedroom is quiet, dark and a comfortable temperature.
- Invest in a comfortable mattress and pillow and quality bedding.
- Create a mental link between your bedroom and sleep by limiting bedroom activities to sleep and sex.
- Only go to bed when you're tired – if you don't feel sleepy at bedtime, do something relaxing until you do.
- If you're not asleep after 20 minutes, or wake during the night and have trouble getting back to sleep, don't stay in bed feeling frustrated. Instead, get up and do something that helps you feel calm and relaxed until you feel sleepy again.

Everyone is different, and you might need to experiment to find the sleep hygiene routine that works best for you.

Focus on perseverance rather than the idea of success or failure. Remember that even small changes make a difference and add up to bigger changes over time. Every effort will contribute towards achieving a healthy lifestyle so you can get real benefits in your daily life!

**The above information is for general purposes only. Do not hesitate to consult your treating physician, as he or she will be best able to adapt these basic tips to your specific situation.**