

Life After Cancer: Sleep Problems You May Have



Many people have sleep problems after cancer. You may have trouble falling asleep. Or feel like you need to sleep all day long. You may also have trouble staying asleep or have nightmares. Sleep problems can last for a long time after cancer and cancer treatment. They can affect your daily life, work, and relationships.

Types of sleep problems after cancer

Insomnia means you have trouble going to sleep and staying asleep. If you have insomnia, you may have:

- Trouble getting to sleep
- Trouble staying asleep
- Trouble getting back to sleep if you wake in the night
- Early waking and not being able to go back to sleep
- Tiredness all the time, despite spending enough time in bed

Hypersomnia means you sleep too much. If you have hypersomnia, you may:

- Sleep for 10 or more hours a day
- Be unable to stay awake during the day despite lots of sleep
- Find that daytime sleepiness isn't helped with a nap

Vivid, unpleasant dreams are known as **nightmares**. If you have nightmares, you may have symptoms, such as:

- Waking in the middle of the night
- Fear of sleeping
- Daytime sleepiness
- Sleep that doesn't feel restful

What causes sleep problems after cancer?

Many things can affect sleep after cancer, such as:

- Medicines you're taking
- Symptoms linked to cancer, such as nausea, night sweats, or pain
- Getting less physical activity
- Other health problems, like heart disease, urinary problems, or sleep apnea
- Hot flashes caused by hormone changes
- Cancer-related posttraumatic stress
- Worry, depression, or anxiety

- Your sleep hygiene (sleep routine)
- Drinks with alcohol or caffeine

Talk to your healthcare provider if you have sleep problems. Your provider can help you find out the cause of your problems. They can also talk with you about treatment options.

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