

Sleep Management -

Claire Gatenby, Chief Hearing Therapist from the Audiology department at the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital

This month we had Claire Gatenby join us, for a discussion about sleep and the general techniques for sleep management.

The purpose of sleep is to recharge our batteries, and reorganise and reorder thoughts in our brain.

However, researchers are not 100% sure what sleep is about! Notably, a lack of sleep does not cause us any problems; think how Maggie Thatcher famously had 4 hours of sleep a night and ran the country!



Sleep is made up of different physiological states; most people have heard of REM sleep REM stands for Rapid Eye Movement. During this state, our eyes move from side to side, and we have dream cycles, making it difficult to wake up in this state. It is common to have 90 minutes of REM cycles, with a little bit of waking between each stage.

Another stage of sleep is NREM - Non-Rapid Eye Movement. This occurs first thing at night, and is a stage where we experience varying depths of sleep, thus NREM includes lighter and deeper states of sleep, which often makes us think that the quality of our sleep is not good as we are coming out of consciousness. However, Claire reassured us that this is fine, and is perfectly normal - the more we worry about it the more it will affect our sleep!

During a normal night's sleep we will experience different cycles of REM and NREM - each cycle lasting about 90 minutes. It is very common to wake up after these 90 minutes. How conscious we are of these awakenings varies from person to person, as sometimes we can have between 9 - 10 awakenings in one night. Further, as we get older the more awakenings we will have. Claire then discussed these awakenings in detail, noting that it is actually normal to turn over and go back to sleep. The first awakening occurs after 1 and a half to 3 hours after we fall asleep. Claire also told us that there are more dream cycles as the night goes on, and in the second part of the night we have less deep sleep.

If you have any comments or questions regarding the Tinnitus Support Group, please contact:
Jess Freeman, TSG Co-ordinator, NDA, 120 Thorpe Road, Norwich, NR1 1RT
Tel: 01603 404440, Email: tinnitus@norfolkdeaf.org.uk

How much sleep we actually need varies from person to person, and the quantity and quality we get is different each night. Claire noted that it is important to recognise that our daily biorhythm varies - and we may have a dip during the afternoon. We also discussed our circadian rhythms, learning that we have natural highs and lows during the day. Therefore, if we have a dip in the afternoon we may fall asleep, putting the sleep in the bank and having much less sleep at night. Claire recommended to avoid naps in the daytime, and to keep active during those dips in the afternoon to prevent us napping. She also noted that when we watch TV in the evening, it is better to have a very bright light to prevent us falling asleep, as receptors in the back of our eyes react to levels of light. Low levels of light trigger the release of the sleep hormone melatonin causing us to feel sleepy.

Sleep Problems:

Insomnia is defined as taking more than 30 minutes to get to sleep, 3 or 4 nights a week. However, only 1 in 10 people have persistent sleep problems, this rises to 1 in 5 for those above the age of 65. Claire recommends being aware of our natural rhythm, see when we are tired and when our natural sleep time is. Only go to bed if you are sleepy, otherwise you will lie awake. Once you have established when you are sleepy make that your bed-time.



Effects of poor sleep:

Poor sleep has no particular detrimental effect - Claire noted that you would need a considerable lack of sleep to have an effect. Further, sleep is not for the day ahead, it is for the day you have just had, so if you have been active in the day you will have a deeper sleep that night. Claire referred to a research trial where people were paid not to sleep, and it had no detrimental effect on them. However, in

comparison to how you may feel when you don't sleep, it may cause you to panic if you do not sleep - which causes some psychological detrimental effects. A busy mind affects sleep, as your brain waves are active again, which makes it harder to get back to a relaxed state. Thus, a circle of poor sleep leads to stress and an inability to sleep well - making it have a knock-on effect.

Tinnitus and sleep:

Lots of people with tinnitus sleep very well, and they have the same tinnitus as those that do not sleep well. When those with tinnitus awaken at night, they become alerted to the tinnitus and listen to it. Thus, it is advisable to have something in the background, such as having an open window or using a fan. Notably, 50% of tinnitus sufferers at the NNUH sleep well!

If you have any comments or questions regarding the Tinnitus Support Group, please contact:
Jess Freeman, TSG Co-ordinator, NDA, 120 Thorpe Road, Norwich, NR1 1RT
Tel: 01603 404440, Email: tinnitus@norfolkdeaf.org.uk

Tinnitus and night time:

People tend to notice their tinnitus more at night, as there are less distractions and it is a quiet environment. Claire advises those that wear hearing aids to leave them on until the very last minute - as 20 minutes with no sound when they are off makes the brain send more tinnitus (neurotransmitters) and makes our brain more aware of the tinnitus.

It is important to have a more relaxed attitude to sleep - and there are many devices that could help, such as pillow speakers. At the NDA offices we have a selection of devices donated by the British Tinnitus Association for everyone to come and try out - so please feel free to drop in our ALD Clinics or come to the next meeting and we can have a look at them all!

Sleep Management:

Claire advises to keep a sleep diary, and recognise sleep for what it is - but most importantly change our beliefs about sleep and think positively. We can do this by having a bit of thinking time during the day, or before bed think about what we need to do tomorrow and put it to one side so we can sleep easier.

Our autonomic nervous system has the sympathetic pathway that controls our get up and go and reacts to stressful situations. The parasympathetic pathway is responsible for allowing our bodies to recover once the stressful situation has passed. These two pathways are usually equal but with ongoing stress the sympathetic pathway can be the dominant pathway, thus our ability to sleep well and recover well is effected as the parasympathetic pathway is underworking. So, to get a good night's sleep - de-stressing is very important!

Sleep Plan:

Claire advises to stick to this plan for several weeks, to establish a good sleep pattern;

- always go to bed and get up at the same time
- make sure the room is dark - as the light receptors in our eyes will release the sleep hormone if it is dark
- no clock
- try not to watch TV or read in bed - as the TV or phone has a blue light, which is stimulating
- no cat naps
- turn lights out when you feel sleepy
- keep eyes open as it helps to release the sleep hormone
- repeat a neutral word
- breathe from diaphragm
- if have real difficulty, go into a different room
- try to exercise every day
- avoid food and drink before bed-time
- limit tea and coffee intake
- avoid alcohol before bed

If you have any comments or questions regarding the Tinnitus Support Group, please contact:

Jess Freeman, TSG Co-ordinator, NDA, 120 Thorpe Road, Norwich, NR1 1RT

Tel: 01603 404440, Email: tinnitus@norfolkdeaf.org.uk

- have a bath instead of a shower, using lavender oil is sleep inducing - and so are lettuces!

Next TSG meeting

Our next meeting will be on Tuesday 21st July 2015, starting at 2:30pm. Maria Holland from Tai Chi Norfolk will be coming along to do a taster session of some basic Tai Chi exercises, to help reduce stress related symptoms that occur with tinnitus. The session will be aimed at beginners, and will be focused upon exercises that can be done whilst sitting in a chair. Please call 01603 404440 or email me at tinnitus@norfolkdeaf.org.uk if you would like to book a place.

Future Meetings:

- Thursday 6th August, 2:30pm - 4:00pm, *Relaxation and Stress Management for people with tinnitus* - Claire Gatenby
- Monday 14th September, 6:30pm - 8:00pm, *A cognitive (psychological) approach to tinnitus* - Dr Laurence McKenna
- Wednesday 7th October, 2:30pm - 4:00pm, *Mindfulness* - David Spicer
- Monday 16th November, 7:00pm - 8:30pm, *The Neuroscience of tinnitus* - Josephine Swinhoe

If you have any comments or questions regarding the Tinnitus Support Group, please contact:
Jess Freeman, TSG Co-ordinator, NDA, 120 Thorpe Road, Norwich, NR1 1RT
Tel: 01603 404440, Email: tinnitus@norfolkdeaf.org.uk