



Insomnia and tiredness

During pregnancy, your body works extremely hard, and it is very common – and normal- to become tired, weary or exhausted. Expecting a baby may make you feel excited, anxious, concerned, happy and fearful, which often makes it difficult for your mind to “switch off” when you go to bed. You may also be physically uncomfortable – your breasts may feel tender if you lie on them, you may have heartburn if you lie flat, your back may ache in certain positions or you may need to keep getting up to empty your bladder. Vivid, dreams are common and may be related to subconscious worries about the birth, or your baby.

Tips for coping with insomnia and tiredness

- Develop a positive attitude of mind. If you are getting less sleep than you would do normally, but are coping – why worry about it?
- Take a nap in the daytime if at all possible. If you are at home with small children, try to rest with your feet up if they have a sleep.
- At work, move away from your desk at lunchtime, have something to eat and drink and take a walk in the fresh air. If your job allows flexibility, organise to work at home or change your start and finish times.
- Rationalise your housework to conserve energy, or ask others to help.
- Establish a regular bedtime routine incorporating relaxation. Avoid watching the news – listen to some music or read a book. Do gentle yoga or relaxation exercises, or take a walk around the garden
- A warm drink may help but avoid stimulants such as coffee, tea, cola and chocolate, as well as cheese and wine.
- Make sure your bedroom is warm enough - but not too warm - and well ventilated.

- Ensure your mattress is right for you – mattresses should be renewed about every seven years to remain firm, and turned regularly
- Do not take anything connected with your work into the bedroom, and resolve any arguments with your partner before going to bed, if possible
- Sex helps you to sleep because the endorphins (“feel good” chemicals) relax you and make you sleepy.
- Wear earplugs and an eye mask if you are bothered by noise and light
- Use plenty of pillows to make yourself comfortable
- Visualisation (“counting sheep”) – imagine you are somewhere which conjures up a feeling of tranquillity and joy for you. If all else fails, try counting backwards from 1000!
- Try SOS – Sigh Out Slowly – focus on breathing out – start by giving a big “sigh of relief” then letting breathing in take care of itself.
- In the middle of the night, don’t panic about not being asleep - have a drink, walk about or read and listen to music.
- Try herbal remedies such as camomile tea but avoid excessive amounts as it can have the opposite effect
- A hop pillow may help but drinking teas made from hops should only be done on the advice of a medical herbalist as there is currently no evidence regarding the safety or effectiveness.
- Aromatherapy essential oils such as lavender or ylang ylang - 4 drops in total to a teaspoon of grapeseed carrier oil added to your bath water
- Do not leave an aromatherapy burner or vaporiser on all night – prolonged use can be nauseating, both for you and your partner. Put the vaporiser on for 10 to 15 minutes just before going to bed then switch it off
- Bach flower remedies - Rescue remedy for general stress; mimulus or larch if you wake up frightened from a vivid dream; use olive for tiredness; hornbeam for weariness
- Massage– ask your partner to massage your back, shoulders, neck or feet
- Other complementary therapies - reflexology, shiatsu or aromatherapy, acupuncture, tai chi, yoga, exercise, or relaxation classes

- Hypnotherapy or counselling can be beneficial if you are very stressed or have particular emotional issues
- Only request a prescription for sleeping tablets as a very last resort.

Some homeopathic remedies which may be useful for insomnia and tiredness

Try ACONITE if you

- are restless, tossing and waking at the slightest sound
- sleep on your back with a hand under your head or propped up
- have vivid confused dreams
- feel anxious, nervous & frightened

Try COFFEA if you

- sleep until 0300 hrs then doze
- lie down and close your eyes but can't get to sleep
- have an overactive mind
- feel excited and euphoric
- wake up at the slightest noise
- have long vivid dreams

Try BELLADONNA if you

- sleep deeply but keep jerking awake
- feel anxious and nervous
- sleep upright with head falling backwards
- have nightmares about arguments, fires or falling

Try GELSEMIUM if you

- are sleepy and sluggish in the day with headaches
- have serious itching of your head & face
- feel nervous, weary and want to be left alone
- are restless and murmur in your sleep
- have disturbing dreams of death & dying

Always inform your midwife if you are using any natural remedies or receiving treatment from a complementary therapist

For more individualised advice on coping with insomnia and tiredness, call Expectancy on **0906 400 6227** (calls charged at £1.50 per minute, from a BT landline; calls from mobiles and other networks may vary)