



Persistent pelvic pain and sleep

Persistent pelvic pain (PPP) can affect the quality and length of your sleep, and poor sleep can increase your sensitivity to pain. This can be a vicious cycle.

Mood disorders such as depression and anxiety are more common with PPP, and people with these conditions often experience sleep disturbance.

When you manage sleep problems, it can improve your mood, pain and quality of life.

What you can do

Relaxation strategies

Relaxation strategies can reduce tension in your body.

- Breathing exercises – deep and focused breathing can slow your heart rate and reduce feelings of anxiety and depression.
- Progressive muscle relaxation – involves tensing and relaxing muscle groups. It can be used in combination with breathing exercises.
- Meditation – helps you focus your attention. It can reduce stress and anxiety. It is also used in other relaxation techniques, such as yoga.

- Mindfulness – a type of meditation that helps you stay calm, focus on the present moment and not worry about the past or future. Mindfulness skills can improve how you feel physically and mentally.

Good sleep habits

Good sleep habits can help improve the length and quality of your sleep. For example:

- make your bedroom a restful place (i.e. dark, quiet and a comfortable temperature), and only use your bed for sleep and sex
- turn your alarm clock away from you to avoid 'clock watching', and if you cannot sleep, get up and do something calming – don't force it
- get comfortable – use pillows under legs, hips or knees to reduce pain and improve comfort in bed
- wind down in the evening in another part of the house (e.g. read a book on the couch)
- get up at the same time every morning and get out into the daylight as soon as possible after waking
- do regular physical activity and spend time outdoors on most days.

You can try other things, for example:

- don't eat or drink close to bedtime
- don't go to bed hungry
- don't have daytime naps longer than 20 minutes
- don't read news or social media close to bedtime
- don't use electronic devices within an hour before bed
- don't drink alcohol or caffeine, or smoke cigarettes – these disturb sleep patterns.

Cognitive behaviour therapy for insomnia (CBT-I)

CBT-I is a short, structured approach to treating insomnia. It focuses on your thoughts, behaviours and how you feel about sleep. Health professionals trained in CBT-I can help you manage pain and improve your sleep.

Apps and digital programs

You can try different apps and digital programs. For example:

- guided meditation and mindfulness apps, such as 'Smiling Mind'
- digital CBT-I programs, such as 'This Way Up' and 'A Mindful Way'.

When to see your doctor

If your sleep or pain is not improving, talk to your doctor. They will help with practical ideas and may refer you to a specialist, such as a psychologist or sleep specialist.

For more information, resources and references visit jeanhailes.org.au/health-a-z/persistent-pelvic-pain and sleephealthfoundation.org.au



Phone 03 9453 8999
jeanhailes.org.au

Jean Hailes for Women's Health gratefully acknowledges the support of the Australian Government.

Created May 2023

Disclaimer: This information does not replace medical advice. If you are worried about your health, talk to your doctor or healthcare team.

We write health information for people with diverse backgrounds, experiences and identities. We use the term 'women', but we acknowledge that this term is not inclusive of all people who may use our content.

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