

THE
Carewell
HANDBOOK



helping you have more energy to care

Carewell brings together personal tips from carers and information, tools, support and expert advice from Bupa and Carers UK to help you have more energy to care

Brought to you by



CARERS UK
the voice of carers

Carewell

Looking after a friend or family member when they need care can be immensely rewarding but it can also be incredibly stressful and exhausting at times. And without the right support, it can take a serious toll on your own health, often leaving you without enough energy to care.

Together with the help of carers, health experts and MEND, Bupa and Carers UK have developed Carewell. This short handbook provides you with helpful tips to give you more energy to care and it's been designed so that you can easily dip in and out of sections quickly when you need to.

We understand that everyone's situation is different, so this handbook won't be able to address all the challenges you might face. To get further information, please visit carewelluk.org where you'll find expert advice, resources to help you plan ahead and tools to help you monitor your progress. We want you to continue to help us develop Carewell – so if you have a great tip or piece of advice, please join us online and share it with the community.

To get started, simply fill in the lifestyle checker on the next page. This will give you an idea of which area you might need to make some simple changes in, to help improve your energy levels.

ICON KEY:



Watch and listen to audio/video content online



Further additional resources and practical tools available online



Find out about other helpful organisations online

Find your focus

There may be many different factors that affect your energy to care. But we know that it's much more effective to focus on making small changes in just one of the areas below rather than trying to change too much at once. Although there might be several sections highlighted to you as areas that you could work on, it's important you choose the one area that you feel most able to make changes in. Remember that whatever changes you make are likely to have a positive impact on other areas of your life too.

Simply read the statements and think about how often you feel like that, then circle the appropriate letter.

A = Never B = Sometimes C = Often

less stress

I feel tense, nervous or anxious, or am unable to sleep at night because of thoughts going round in my head	A	B	C
I am making mistakes or am particularly clumsy or accident prone	A	B	C
I tend to get angry or irritable with others	A	B	C
I am smoking more, drinking more alcohol or using drugs to help me cope	A	B	C
<i>Circle the response you gave most frequently to these statements</i>	A	B	C

eat well

I skip meals due to being too busy, or I eat erratically whenever I can fit in a meal or snack	A	B	C
I eat fast food or convenience meals	A	B	C
My main meals rarely include a variety of foods (eg lean protein such as meat, starchy foods such as rice or pasta, and fruit/vegetables)	A	B	C
I struggle to eat five portions of fruit and vegetables a day	A	B	C
I find it a challenge to drink as much water as I should	A	B	C
<i>Circle the response you gave most frequently to these statements</i>	A	B	C

Complete *move more* and *sleep well* on the next page

move more

I don't do any physical activity in my current job (if you do not work, time spent on daily tasks)	A	B	C
I don't do leisure activities/hobbies which involve physical activity	A	B	C
I use a car or public transport to get around rather than walking or cycling	A	B	C
Becoming fitter would make it easier for me to complete my daily tasks	A	B	C
<i>Circle the response you gave most frequently to these statements</i>	A	B	C

sleep well

I find it difficult to fall asleep	A	B	C
I struggle to sleep continuously through the night	A	B	C
I wake up in the early hours and can't get back to sleep	A	B	C
Sleep problems affect my functioning during the day (e.g. feeling tired, difficulty concentrating, forgetting things)	A	B	C
<i>Circle the response you gave most frequently to these statements</i>	A	B	C

Get your results

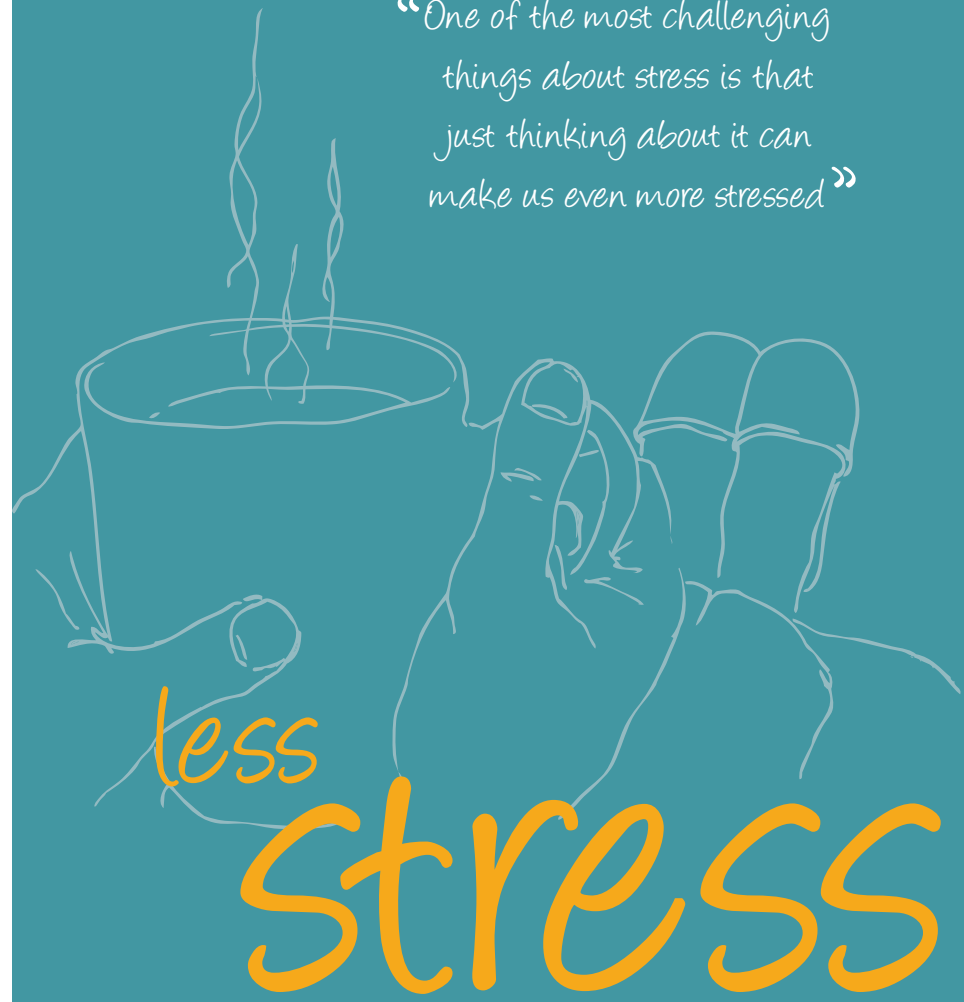
Look at each area and see what your most frequent answers were for each one.

If you answered **mostly As** for an area then this is unlikely to be affecting your energy to care and you probably don't need to focus on it.

If you answered **mostly Bs** for an area then you might find it helpful to flick to the relevant chapter in this booklet to see if there are any small and simple changes you can make to improve your energy levels.

If you answered **mostly Cs** for an area then this is something that is probably affecting your energy to care quite a lot. Have a read of the corresponding chapter in this booklet to find out what changes you can put in place to give yourself the boost that you need.

“One of the most challenging things about stress is that just thinking about it can make us even more stressed”



For many carers, stress will simply be a fact of life. But learning how to recognise what makes you stressed and how you deal with it will help you to manage your stress levels and begin to feel more in control of your daily tasks.

less stress

Caring can place huge demands on your time and energy, so there will probably be many times during your week when you feel your stress levels rising. But while experiencing stress is unavoidable at times, the last thing you want is for it to start affecting your health and energy to care.

What is stress?

It's our automatic response to threatening situations. It causes our brain and body to release hormones that raise our blood pressure and make our heart beat faster.

Spotting stress

Stress affects us all in different ways. But there are certain feelings and behaviours that are closely linked to stress, many of which carers will know about all too well. For more information on common signs of stress, visit carewelluk.org

This kind of stress may take its toll on your health, put a huge strain on relationships and could end up affecting the person you care for. So it's important to take steps early on, before it all gets too much.

“When I'm stressed I just want to get into bed and hide from the world. I feel lethargic and anxious and I completely lose my appetite and start drinking more”

Catherine, carer, age 38

What makes you stressed?

Often we may feel stressed without knowing exactly why. But there might actually be patterns to your rising stress levels. Think about whether certain times of the day or particular situations make you feel stressed. The first step in coping with stress is being able to identify what these triggers are. Try to keep a record of what happens during each day and how it makes you feel to help you see what causes your stress levels to rise. For more information on stress triggers, visit carewelluk.org

“I feel my stress levels rising when I have to deal with the doctors and local authorities. It's a constant battle to get them to listen to me. I end up phoning and writing and then writing again, all the while I can feel my stress levels increasing”

Bob, carer, age 60

How to cope with stress

Once you have recognised what it is that's making you feel stressed, you can start to look at the different ways of dealing with it. Here are some useful tips that may help you to cope with the demands of caring for someone. For more information and tools that can help you manage stress, visit carewelluk.org

Step away from stress

Don't be afraid to have a breather when you feel your stress levels rising. Sometimes just five minutes in the fresh air can help you calm down and gather your thoughts.

“When I feel like things are getting too much I go for a short walk on my own. It helps me to clear my head and come to terms with all the changes in my life”

Bob, carer, age 60

“I often focus on all the negative stuff when I'm stressed. It becomes a vicious cycle because I know that there are things that I'll never be able to change. So before I go to bed at night I always remember all that I've done for Dad during the day and I try to focus on that”

Joyce, carer, age 37

Focus on the positive

When you're caring for someone there will be things that are completely out of your control. And this can make you feel powerless. Try to recognise all that you have done today rather than focusing on the things you simply can't change.



Reach out to others

Guilt, resentment, hopelessness, rage... caring can lead to a wide range of different feelings. But just at a time when you need help and support most, many carers find that friends and family have faded away. It can really help to chat to others with similar experiences. For more information on where you can find more support, visit carewelluk.org

“Once I've put my sister to bed, I log on to the Carers UK online forum and just have a chat and a bit of a rant about my day. It helps me to put things into perspective when I see what other people have to go through.”

Greg, carer, age 54

Plan time for you

Caring for yourself is an essential part of preventing and handling stress, but finding the time to do it may seem impossible. However, even if you can manage just five minutes of time out, it will make a difference.

“My 'me time' is first thing in the morning and last thing at night. I make sure I get up in time to have 15 minutes to myself where I have my breakfast and read a book with a cup of tea before I go to get Mum out of bed. And last thing at night, even if I'm exhausted, I try to have a quick bath and a flick through the paper. Either way, I have a slightly clearer head when I get into bed.”

Claire, carer, age 56



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“It's tempting to have the same meal over and over again when I'm busy, but if I plan ahead then I know I've got something to look forward to later on in the week.”

With all your time and energy focused on caring for someone, eating healthily is probably the last thing on your mind. Especially if money is tight too – then it can seem almost impossible. But introducing a balanced diet doesn't have to cost the earth or take up too much of your time. And getting the nutrients you need, will help you feel less tired and improve your overall wellbeing.

eat well

What should I be eating?

When you're busy it's sometimes easier to just eat the same things over and over again. But the key to a healthy diet is variety – that way you'll get all of the essential vitamins and minerals your body needs. The plate below shows what's in the five food groups and the balance of foods you should be eating across the course of the whole day. Our tips focus

on how to get your daily quota of fruit and vegetables throughout the day, how you can fuel yourself for longer by choosing wholegrain options and how to deal with those afternoon sugar cravings. For more information on different food groups and quick and easy recipe ideas, visit carewelluk.org

THE EAT WELL PLATE

Starchy carbohydrates
(bread, rice, potatoes, pasta)



Fruit and vegetables
(fresh, frozen, tinned, dried)


Protein
(eggs, beans, meat, fish and vegetarian options like soya and Quorn)

Food and drink high in fat and/or sugar (crisps, chocolate, sweets, pastries, pies)

Dairy
(milk, yoghurts, cheese)

An apple a day

The old wives' tale wasn't far wrong. But now we know that we need to eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day to get our nutrient fix and stay fit and healthy. They're not only packed with essential vitamins but also fibre to help your digestion. But when you're constantly on the go it can be a real challenge to reach your daily quota. Try stocking up on dried fruit and tinned or frozen vegetables – they still have all the vitamins and minerals you need but they're cheaper, longer-lasting and easy to add to meals.




“I make my spaghetti bolognaise with chopped carrots, grated courgette, celery and any other vegetable that's in season and I always have a fruit salad for dessert. That way even if I've rushed around like a headless chicken all day I know that I've still managed to get my five-a-day by the time I go to bed”

Doreen, carer, age 59

Fuel yourself for longer

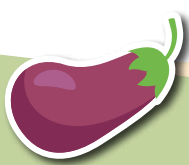
Avoid the afternoon slump by choosing wholemeal or wholegrain starchy carbohydrates (eg wholemeal bread, brown rice or pasta). They're higher in fibre and will release energy slowly throughout the day. Breakfast is a good time to eat more starchy food such as porridge oats or wholegrain cereals as it'll set you up for the day ahead.



“I always make myself a big vat of bircher muesli last thing on Sunday night with yoghurt, oats and grated apple and store it in the fridge for the week ahead. Then all I have to do is chop a banana into it in the morning and it keeps me going till lunchtime”

Kate, carer, age 46





“I keep fruit and nuts in the glove box of my car and my handbag to avoid those inevitable afternoon chocolate biscuit cravings”

Kiranjit, carer, age 38

Running out of steam in the afternoon?

Too much saturated fat (found in fatty meats and pastries) can lead to high cholesterol and may cause heart disease in future. Sugary snacks might give you a quick energy boost, but it won't last long and it'll leave you tired and irritable later on. For more information on what to look out for on food labels and simple cooking tips to reduce the fat in your meals visit carewelluk.org

Do you skip meals?

If you're busy helping someone else with their food at mealtimes then it can be easy to forget to eat yourself or you might just end up picking at stuff. But sticking to a regular meal pattern (breakfast, lunch and dinner plus a couple of healthy snacks) is important. It will keep your energy and concentration levels high and help you avoid snacking on unhealthy foods. For more tips, recipes and tools to help you plan in advance, visit carewelluk.org

- Use visual prompts to remind you to eat. For example put your breakfast bowl and cereal box out on the kitchen table the night before so you won't skip breakfast
- Plan your time in advance so it's easier to eat regular meals. Spend one day shopping and cooking so that the rest of the week you've always got something in the fridge or freezer that's prepared and ready

Healthy hydration

Something as simple as grabbing a glass of water during the day can be easily forgotten when you're busy. But if you don't drink enough fluids during the day you'll lack energy and find it hard to concentrate. You should aim to drink six to eight glasses of water or sugar free fluids every day.

- It's easier to drink water if you always have some with you. Carry a bottle around and take sips whenever you get a second
- Remind yourself to drink. Set the alarm on your phone to jog your memory or put post-it notes around the house

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“I find it hard to fit activity into my busy day but I try to squeeze it in as often as I can because it can really lift my mood”

move
more

The idea of fitting physical activity into the day will be very remote for many carers. But if you plan ahead and get yourself into the routine of doing a little bit every day you'll soon reap the benefits. You'll start to feel more energetic and better able to care.

move more

What is physical activity?

Many people think that exercise has to be vigorous to be worthwhile but this isn't true. We may not realise it but we often do activities throughout our day that help keep us fit and healthy.

Why is physical activity important?

Being active has an endless list of benefits, all of which will help you cope with the challenges of being a carer. Here are just a few:

- Lower stress levels
- Overall wellbeing
- Improved sleep
- Healthier bones and joints



What type of activity should I be doing?

You are probably already doing more physical activity than most, single-handedly cooking, cleaning, doing the shopping and maybe even helping to move and lift the person you are caring for. But the experts tell us that to stay healthy we need to do two types of physical activity each week.

1. Moderate intensity

Doing this type of physical activity will raise your heart rate and make you sweat. One way to tell if you're working at a moderate intensity is if you can still talk, but you can't sing the words to a song.

2. Vigorous intensity

Doing this type of physical activity will raise your heart rate and make you feel out of breath. One way to tell that you're working at a vigorous intensity is that you won't be able to say more than a few words without pausing for breath.



Your weekly activity target

The experts say that to stay healthy, adults should do at least two and a half hours of moderate intensity physical activity every week and an hour and fifteen minutes of vigorous intensity activity every week. However, this doesn't have to be done all in one go. You can do it in smaller, more manageable chunks throughout the day. For more information and support, including tools that will help you plan physical activity into your day, visit carewelluk.org

How to fit exercise into your daily life

It's unrealistic for most carers to be able to take time out for hours of exercise every day. So you might be wondering how you can fit it in with everything else you have to do. Here are some tips to help you be active even on a busy schedule.

Turn everyday chores into a workout

Think about the tasks you have to get through every day – vacuuming, carrying your weekly shopping home, scrubbing the shower screen, raking the leaves up in the garden. The list is endless. And all of these tasks will work different muscles in your body and get your heart pumping too. For additional tips from carers, visit carewelluk.org

Grab every opportunity you can to be active

There are often times when you can walk or cycle instead of driving somewhere. And why not try to take the stairs instead of the lift? Once you get used to spotting these opportunities as a way of incorporating activity into your day, you'll soon start doing them on autopilot.

“I don't have time to set aside for exercising alone, but scrubbing the bathroom and vacuuming can still get me huffing and puffing”

Ann, carer, age 63

“I ditch the car when I can and cycle to the shops. It saves me the money I'd usually spend on fuel”

Siobhan, carer, age 42

Wed Thu Fri Sat

Be active together

It might seem like a sheer luxury to have time on your own to exercise. So is there a way of doing it alongside caring? It could be a walk to the shops, a trip to a suitable session at your local pool or some simple stretching exercises together at home. If you can find something that suits you and the person you're caring for, there could be a benefit to both of you. For more ideas and simple stretching exercises you can do at home, visit carewelluk.org



“When the weather's good I take Mum out in the wheelchair for a walk. It's a great workout for me, especially pushing her up the hills and she loves chatting to the people we bump into along the way”
Raquel, carer, age 39

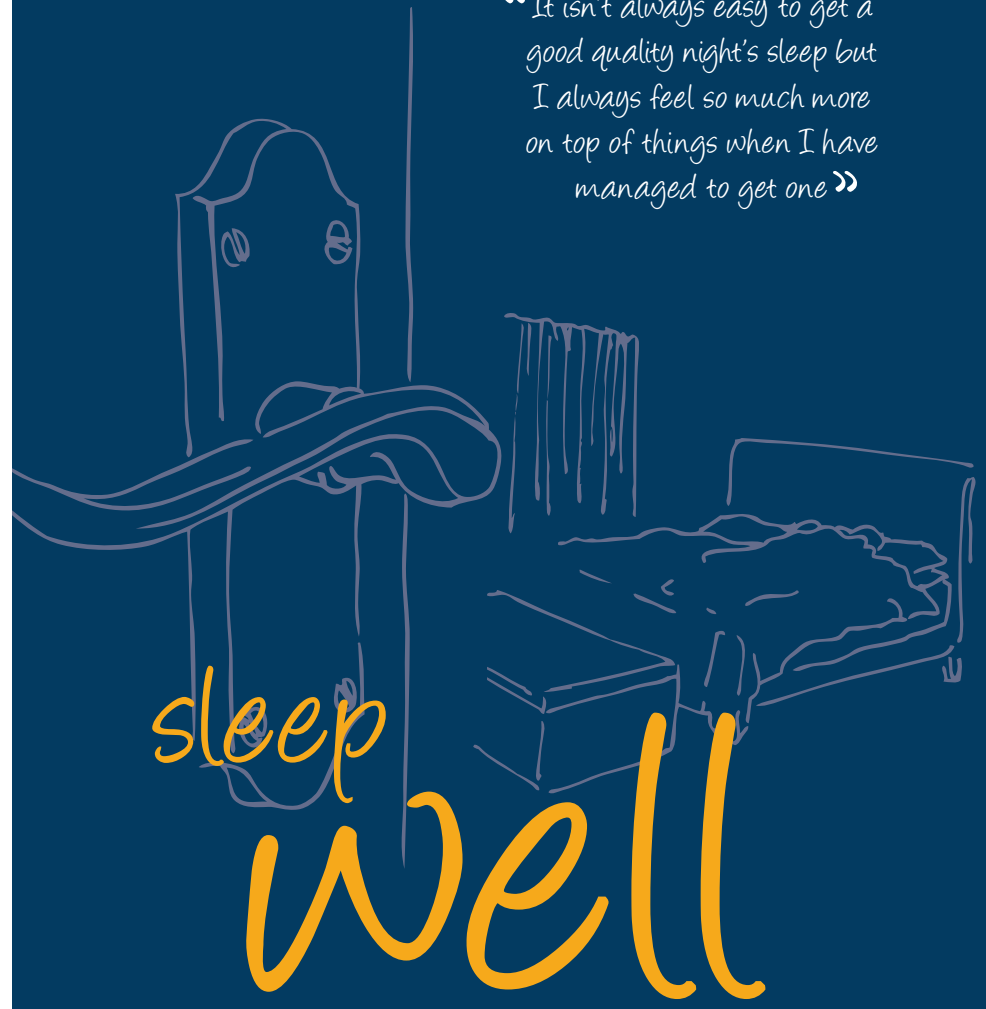
Yoga and tai chi will help you stretch your back, build muscle strength and relieve tension

Pilates will help tone the core muscles around your middle that support your spine

Watch your back

Caring for someone can often mean you're lifting them as well as pushing a wheelchair. And these kinds of activity can take their toll on your back. If you are able to structure your week so that you have some time to go to an exercise class then these particular types of activity will help look after your back and make daily tasks a little easier. For more information and tips to help you look after your back, visit carewelluk.org

“It isn't always easy to get a good quality night's sleep but I always feel so much more on top of things when I have managed to get one”



Sleep is important for everyone, but especially for carers. A good night's sleep will set you up for the day ahead and help you cope with any challenges you face.

SLEEP WELL

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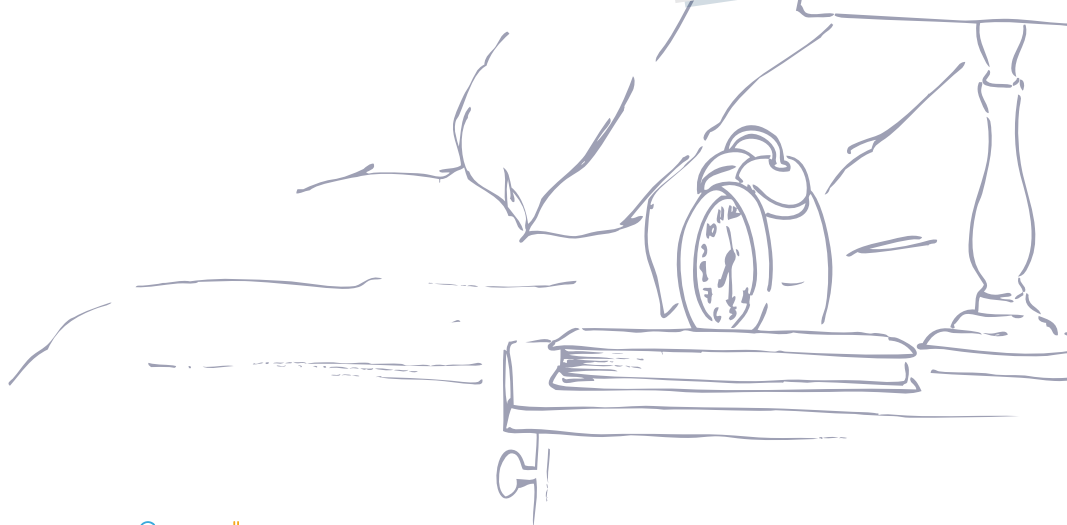


sleep well

Not getting enough sleep can leave you feeling drained and overwhelmed by daily tasks. But it's not particularly easy to get a good night's sleep when you're caring for someone. Your sleep may get disrupted because you need to be there for that person in the middle of the night.

Caring through the night

If you're kept awake because you're worried about the person you're caring for then it might be a good idea to invest in some equipment that will let you know if there's a problem (eg a baby monitor). Your local council may offer telecare and telehealthcare packages that are specifically designed to monitor disabled and older people and give family members peace of mind. It might also be helpful to talk to the GP of the person you're caring for to see if anything can be done about their sleeping habits, which could help you both. For more information on dealing with caring issues through the night and to find out about different organisations that may be able to help, visit carewelluk.org



Steps to better sleep

Here are some tips that carers have told us helps them to get a good night's sleep. Of course there will always be those times when you've tried everything and still can't nod off. And you'll probably feel like tearing your hair out. But in these situations it is best not to worry as experts say it's still beneficial to lie quietly in bed and rest. Flick to the back of this pack to find a sleep CD that is designed to help you relax in the evening.

For more tips to help you sleep, visit carewelluk.org

Make your room sleep-friendly

Making small adjustments to your surroundings, such as making sure your mattress is comfy and taking out any distractions like TVs and computers, will help improve the quality of your sleep.

"I have blackout blinds in my bedroom and instead of turning the bright bedroom light on when I get up during the night to look after Dad, I light a candle. It's less disruptive for both of us and means I can get to sleep again quickly afterwards"

Rebecca, carer, age 52

Get into a regular bedtime routine

Try to go to bed at the same time each day, even at the weekend, as it will get your body into a routine which will help you to sleep better. And if you can, schedule a twenty-minute nap into your day, perhaps when the person you are caring for is also having a nap or if you are able to get someone to come and sit with them for a little while. If you're not getting good quality sleep at night then napping will help you to function during the day.

"A regular bedtime routine helps me sleep. I get up and go to bed at the same time every day even if the opportunity of a lie in ever happens"

Terry, carer, age 73



Manage your stress

Often when we're stressed, as soon as our head hits the pillow, our mind goes into overdrive instead of a deep slumber. It's important to get to the root of what's causing your stress before you can start to tackle it. There are also plenty of relaxation exercises you can do before you go to bed that will help. For more information including relaxation techniques and tools to help you wind down, visit carewelluk.org.



"I'm often kept awake trying to think of all the things I have to do the next day and the list goes over and over in my head. Keeping a notepad by the bed allows me to write things down as I think of them and then forget them as I go to sleep. Everything always seems much more worrying in the middle of the night and often the things on the list are quite pointless when I read them in the morning, but it still gets them out of my head for the rest of the night!"

Dalia, carer, age 43

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carewelluk.org



Bupa is a leading international healthcare group. Our purpose is to help people lead longer, healthier, happier lives by providing a range of healthcare services, support and advice to people throughout their lives. We are a world leader in aged care, providing dementia, nursing and residential care to more than 29,000 people worldwide.

To find out more about Bupa, where your nearest care home is, and our other services visit:

bupa.co.uk

CARERS UK
the voice of carers

Carers UK is a charity set up to support the millions of people who care for an elderly relative, a sick partner or a disabled family member. We help carers by providing support and information and advice about caring, as well as campaigning to make life better for carers. For further information on topics that haven't been covered in this handbook such as advice on financial and practical support with caring and online support from other carers, please visit:

carersuk.org



MEND (Mind, Exercise, Nutrition... Do it!) empowers children and adults to become fitter, healthier and happier and to reach or maintain a healthier weight. We design programmes and services, offering long-term solutions that help people choose healthier foods, spend more time being active and change their behaviour.

mendcentral.org

We'd like to say a big thank you to all the carers that helped us create The Carewell Handbook by sharing all your tips, information and valuable experience with us.

To get the most out of this CD, you will need to use it regularly. We recommend listening to it every night for at least three weeks. Don't worry if you find that your mind starts to wander while you're listening to it, this is perfectly natural and it's important not to fight it and simply let it happen. We hope that you enjoy listening and that it helps you on your way to getting a more restful night's sleep.

Please note that you should not listen to this recording while driving or operating machinery.

Play this sleep CD last thing at night.

It will take you through a range of relaxation techniques and visualisations, designed to help you unwind and get a better night's sleep.



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