

Sleeping Tips

1. Avoid watching TV, eating, and discussing emotional issues in bed. The bed should be used for sleep and sex only.
2. Minimize noise, light, and temperature extremes during sleep with ear plugs, window blinds, or an electric blanket or air conditioner.
3. Try not to drink fluids after 8 p.m. This may reduce awakenings due to urination.
4. Avoid naps, but if you do nap, make it no more than about 25 minutes about eight hours after you awake.
5. Do not expose yourself to bright light if you need to get up at night.
6. Nicotine is a stimulant and should be avoided particularly near bedtime and upon night awakenings.
7. Caffeine is also a stimulant and is present in coffee, soda, tea, and various over-the-counter medications. Caffeine should be discontinued at least four to six hours before bedtime.
8. Alcohol is a depressant and may help you fall asleep, but the subsequent metabolism that clears it from your body when you are sleeping causes a withdrawal. This withdrawal is associated with nightmares and sweats.
9. A light snack may be sleep-inducing, but a heavy meal too close to bedtime interferes with sleep.
10. Do not exercise vigorously just before bed, if you are the type of person who is aroused by exercise.
11. Do not have your pet sleep with you.

Sources

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Sleep Disorders

Sleep is essential to live a healthy and functional life.

Any difficulties related to sleeping, including difficulty falling or staying asleep, falling asleep at inappropriate times, excessive total sleep, or abnormal behaviors associated with sleep, are described as sleep disorders.

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Types

Psychologists/Scientists classify sleep disorders into three separate categories: lack of sleep, disturbed sleep, and excessive sleep.

Lack of Sleep:

- Insomnia – inability to fall asleep.

Disturbed Sleep:

- Sleep apnea – interrupted breathing during sleep
- REM Sleep Behavior Disorder – disruptions in the brain during REM sleep
- Restless Leg Syndrome – prickly or tingling sensations in legs that cause patients to want to move their legs.

Excessive Sleep:

- Narcolepsy – causes patients to fall asleep uncontrollably
- Cataplexy – weakness or paralysis of the muscles
- Sleep Paralysis – inability to move arms, legs, or entire body; occurs when person is falling asleep or waking up
- Hypnagogic Hallucinations – pre-sleep dreams; dream-like hallucinations

Sleep Disorders & Military

Recent data released by the Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center showed that in 2000 there were 3,563 active duty service members diagnosed with sleep apnea and 1,013 service members diagnosed with insomnia. In 2009, there were 20,435 diagnosed with sleep apnea and 19,631 diagnosed with insomnia.



Treatment

Treatment options for sleep disorders include:

- Herbal teas, infusions, and baths
- Medications
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy - teaches patient how to change actions or thoughts that affect sleep
- Oral Appliances – mouth guards
- Continuous Positive Airway Pressure – steady air helps open pathway
- Melatonin – treats circadian rhythm disorders
- Bright Light Therapy

Diagnosis

When asking your doctor about issues involving sleep, he or she may refer you to a sleep clinic. Sleep clinics are useful in detecting specific sleep disorders such as: sleep apnea, narcolepsy, and other heart-related sleep problems. In order to diagnose these disorders, one must be required to spend the night in a sleep lab, keep a sleep diary, and doctors may interview your sleep partner. They also perform tests such as:

- Actigraphy – tracks your sleep-wake cycles at home using a small device worn on the wrist.
- Polysomnogram – overnight evaluation that measures brain wave activity, eye movements, breathing function, oxygen levels, heart rate, and muscle activity.
- Multiple sleep latency test – doctors