TYPES OF SLEEP PROBLEMS

There are more than 70 different sleep disorders. The following are the more common types:

**Insomnia** comes in many different forms. It may be characterized by difficulty falling asleep, difficulty staying asleep (many awakenings), and waking up too early.

**Excessive daytime sleepiness (EDS)** is a condition in which an individual feels very drowsy during the day and has an overwhelming urge to fall asleep, even after getting enough nighttime sleep.

**Narcolepsy** is a chronic neurological disorder that affects the region of the central nervous system that regulates sleep and wakefulness. Sudden, uncontrollable episodes of sleep at inappropriate times, such as while having dinner, talking, driving or working.

**Sleep apnea** is a serious, potentially life-threatening breathing disorder. More common in men than women, apnea is experienced by sufferers as a lack of air flow throughout the night.

**Periodic leg movements in sleep (PLMS)** is a syndrome that consists of periodic movements of the legs, feet, and/or toes during sleep. People with PLMS are often not aware of these movements, and often complain of several symptoms.

**Restless legs syndrome (RLS)** is marked by uncomfortable leg sensations that occur continually while the body is at rest. It may be a central nervous system disorder and occasionally is associated with iron-deficiency anemia, pregnancy or diabetes.

WHEN TO SEEK HELP FOR SLEEP PROBLEMS

See a healthcare provider if any of the following are true:

- Sleep problems seriously interfere with school, work or relationships with friends or family.
- You rely on sleeping pills to make you sleep, or amphetamines to keep you alert.
- You have depression, chronic anxiety, pain or change in medication. A healthcare provider can give you information and help with these possible causes of sleep problems.
- You snore heavily, or stop breathing at intervals during the night (often starting again with a gasp). You may have sleep apnea, which results from a blocked or partly blocked airway.

WEB-SITE RESOURCES

- [www.sleepfoundation.org/](http://www.sleepfoundation.org/) An independent nonprofit organization dedicated to improving public health and safety by achieving understanding of sleep and sleep disorders.
- [www.sleepnet.com/](http://www.sleepnet.com/) Everything you wanted to know about sleep but were too tired to ask ™ (since 1995).
- [www.sleepquest.com/](http://www.sleepquest.com/) A powerful resource to help acquire knowledge about the vast field of sleep medicine.
- [www.aasmnet.org/](http://www.aasmnet.org/) A professional membership organization dedicated to the advancement of sleep medicine and related research.

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leep is as essential to you as food, air, or water. For many, sleep is a commodity that is short-changed because of hectic schedules, longer work hours, late-night studying, and a lack of time for relaxation and play.

Chronic sleep deprivation is becoming a significant problem in society. Insomnia, obstructive sleep apnea, restless leg syndrome, and other less common sleep disorders can lead to sleep deprivation.

Sleep deprivation may cause decreased alertness and concentration which are major factors contributing to motor-vehicle accidents, irritability, fatigue, decreased work and school performance, and even depression.

Getting a good night’s sleep regularly is a healthy habit and will help promote optimum physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

WHAT IS SLEEP?

Somewhat mysterious, sleep is an activity in which both our bodies and our minds are involved. Our sleep patterns are set by the release of hormones throughout a 24-hour day. The timing for the release of hormones is set by outside cues, especially darkness and light. Other things such as eating patterns, exercise, and social interactions also contribute to help set your sleeping-waking clock. With this in mind, any change in schedule will affect your body’s clock. For most, it takes between 3-7 days to reset the body’s internal clock to new cues.

10 STRATEGIES FOR A GOOD NIGHT’S SLEEP

1. **Make getting a good night’s sleep a priority.** A good night's sleep is whatever leaves you refreshed and alert the following day. Quality of sleep is just as important as quantity of sleep.

2. **Set your body clock.** Get up the same time every day of the week. This helps synchronize your biological clock. Avoid sleeping in on the weekends unless it is only for one hour. Going to bed at the same time is less critical.

3. **Do not take naps the day after you have lost sleep.** When you feel sleepy, get up and do something. Walk, make the bed, do errands. While studying, get up regularly to walk around your room. Do a gentle stretch. That will increase the flow of oxygen to the brain and help you be more alert.

4. **Regular exercise during the day enhances sleep.** Strenuous exercise in the late afternoon seems to promote more restful sleep. Research suggests that exercise at that time can help deepen your sleep, which means that you spend more time in the deeper stages of sleep.

5. **Develop a bedtime routine.** Stop studying and don’t get into any stimulating conversations or activities a half hour or hour before bed. Do something that is relaxing — read light material, listen to soothing music, watch a mindless TV show.

6. **Avoid stimulants such as caffeine from late afternoon on.** Caffeine, a chemical in coffee, tea, soda, chocolate, etc., causes hyperactivity and wakefulness. Also, avoid smoking in the evening since nicotine is also a stimulant.

7. **Don’t drink alcohol before bedtime.** Alcohol may help you to fall asleep, however it results in shallow and disturbed sleep, abnormal dream periods, and frequent early morning awakening.

8. **Schedule your evening meal at least 4 hours before bedtime.** Avoid heavy meals close to bedtime. If the major meal is scheduled 4 hours before bed your body has a chance to digest it and quiet down.

9. **Make your bedroom comfortable.** Sleeping in a cooler room tends to promote good sleep. Also, adjusting the humidity so it isn’t too dry or too humid will aid in comfortable sleep. Finally, adjust the noise level to accommodate a sleeping atmosphere.

10. **Go to bed only when tired.** If not asleep within 15-20 minutes get out of bed and do something relaxing. Return to bed only when sleepy. Avoid eating again so it does not become a reward for sleeplessness.