



Sleep

How much should I be sleeping at night?

It is recommended that you get 7 to 8 hours of sleep every 24 hours.

If I am unable to sleep or if I am sleepy most of the time, what could be wrong?

It could be that nothing is wrong or it could be that you have a sleep disorder. You might find yourself being too tired (excessive sleepiness), having trouble sleeping (insomnia) or unusual activities during sleep (like sleep walking). One common cause for being too tired is sleep apnea (read about this below).

What can I do to get better sleep?

Sleeping poorly at night can be a big problem for many people. Fortunately, there are very good treatments available. Simple measures (called sleep hygiene) can be quite helpful for some people, and include:

- Do not nap during the day, it may make you more tired when it is time to sleep.
- Avoid alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, and meals just before bedtime.
- Exercise each day, but not too close to bedtime.
- Do not lie in bed and watch the clock. Read or watch TV to help you relax.

If poor sleep is still a problem, talk to your health care provider. They may suggest that you see a psychologist for behavioral therapy or that you take a sleeping pill (hypnotic medication). Sleeping pills have developed a bad reputation because of their potential for abuse and addiction. However, newer sleep medicines are available which are safe and well tolerated.

If I think I have a sleep disorder, what should I do?

If you think you have a sleep disorder, see your health care provider. Sleep disorders are common but cannot be treated until they are diagnosed. For some, if you just follow the sleep hygiene measures listed above your sleep may improve. It may be that weight loss is recommended, or it could be that you need to see a doctor that is a sleep specialist. It is important that you sleep well. Recent research has shown that not sleeping enough can lead to heart attack, obesity, diabetes and other health problems.

Should I be worried about snoring?

If you snore, you are not alone! About 30 to 50% of all people snore, at one time or another. Snoring can be a problem if it bothers your bed partner. Speak to your health care provider if your snoring is disturbing your sleep or your bed partner.

Loud snoring can be a sign of a more serious problem called **sleep apnea**. When you have sleep apnea, you stop breathing during sleep and wake up to breathe. This cycle of waking up frequently disturbs your sleep. When your breathing stops, the oxygen level in your blood can drop. This drop in oxygen can put a strain on your heart and brain. Weight loss can help treat sleep apnea. There is also a treatment called CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure). If your bed partner has noticed that you stop breathing during sleep, it is very important to discuss this with your health care provider who may refer you to a sleep specialist.

Words to search for on the internet: sleep deprivation, snoring, sleep apnea, obstructive sleep apnea, central sleep apnea.

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