

eHouseCall

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A Monthly Electronic Newsletter from HealthLink

Doctor's Bag



by Robert Sorrenti, MD
Chief Medical Officer

Sleep disorders can affect your health, safety and well-being.

Sleep disorders are treatable. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends calling the doctor if you experience any of the following symptoms:

- ◆ You consistently take more than 30 minutes to fall asleep at night.
- ◆ You consistently awaken several times each night and then have trouble falling back to sleep, or you awaken too early in the morning.
- ◆ You feel sleepy during the day, take frequent naps or fall asleep at inappropriate times.
- ◆ Your bed partner says you snore loudly, snort, make choking sounds or stop breathing during sleep.
- ◆ You have restlessness in your legs or arms, especially in the evening and when trying to fall asleep.
- ◆ Your bed partner notices that your legs or arms jerk often during sleep.
- ◆ You have vivid, dreamlike experiences while falling asleep or dozing.
- ◆ You have episodes of sudden muscle weakness when you are angry or fearful, or when you laugh.
- ◆ You feel as though you cannot move when you first wake up.

HLInfo YOUR MONTHLY GUIDE TO HEALTH CARE AWARENESS

SEPTEMBER

How's Your Sleep Hygiene?

If you have trouble sleeping, it may be the result of poor sleep hygiene. Here are 10 "Healthy Sleep Tips" from the National Sleep Foundation:

1. Maintain a regular sleep-wake cycle, even on weekends. People with regular sleep habits report the fewest problems with insomnia.
2. Establish a regular, relaxing bed routine. For example, soak in a warm bath, read a book or listen to soothing music.
3. Create a sleep environment that is dark, quiet, comfortable and cool. Ear plugs and eye shades can be simple solutions to a partner who snores or likes to read in bed.
4. Sleep on a comfortable mattress and pillows. A good quality mattress usually lasts about 10 years. A pillow is only useful when it supports your neck and spine.
5. Use your bedroom only for sleep and sex. No reading or working in bed, no TV.
6. Finish eating at least 2-3 hours before your regular bedtime. Save the spicy food for lunchtime if heartburn wakes you up.
7. Exercise regularly and complete your workout at least a few hours before bedtime. Late afternoon exercise is the perfect way to help you fall asleep at night.
8. Avoid caffeine products (coffee, tea, soft drinks, chocolate, etc.) close to bedtime. Caffeine can remain in the body from 3-5 hours, but some people feel the effects for up to 12 hours.
9. Avoid nicotine products close to bedtime. Nicotine is a stimulant. Difficulty sleeping is just one more reason you should quit smoking.
10. Avoid alcohol close to bedtime. Alcohol can cause nighttime awakenings and restless sleep.



DidUKnow?

Here are "Sleep Facts and Stats" from the National Sleep Foundation:

- ◆ Before Thomas Edison's invention of the light bulb, people slept an average of 10 hours a night; today Americans average 6.9 hours of sleep on weeknights and 7.5 hours per night on weekends.
- ◆ Most adults need 7-8 hours of sleep each night. School-age children and teens need at least 9 hours of sleep each night.
- ◆ Approximately 70 million Americans are affected by a sleep problem. About 40 million Americans suffer from chronic sleep disorders, and an additional 20-30 million are affected by intermittent sleep-related problems.
- ◆ More than two-thirds of all children experience one or more sleep problems at least a few nights a week.
- ◆ Sleep deprivation and disorders are estimated to cost Americans over \$100 billion annually in lost productivity, medical expenses, sick leave, and property and environmental damage.
- ◆ The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration conservatively estimates that 100,000 police-reported crashes are caused by drowsy drivers each year.

Information Sources

National Sleep Foundation (www.sleepfoundation.org)

WebMD "Insomnia: Tired & Sleepless?"

MedLine Plus, a Service of the U.S. National Library and the National Institute (www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/sleepdisorders)

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, "In Brief: Your Guide to Healthy Sleep" NIH Publication No. 06-5800 April 2006

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