

Why can't I sleep?



Understanding sleep disorders and what you can do about them.

It's a fact. Almost everyone has had trouble falling asleep at some point. Temporary sleep disturbances, such as everyday stress, anxiety or even a bad cold can keep you from getting a good night's rest. However, if you're experiencing any of the following on a regular basis, you may have a sleep disorder.

Do you ...

- Feel sleepy during the day?
- Get irritated easily?
- Have a hard time concentrating?
- Need a nap most days?
- Need caffeine to stay awake?

What's keeping you up at night?

Insomnia is one of the most common sleep disorders. If you have trouble falling and staying asleep, if you wake up during the night or wake up too early, you may be suffering from insomnia.

Medication, behavioral therapy and practicing good sleep habits – like keeping a regular sleep schedule or doing relaxation exercises before calling it a night – are all good options for treating insomnia.

Breathing Disorders in Sleep

Snoring is caused by vibrations in the upper throat area. Most often it's caused by poor muscle tone or extra fat in the neck. Try sleeping with your head elevated or with a humidifier to help you stop snoring.

Sleep apnea is a serious disorder in which breathing stops during sleep for 10 seconds or longer. It can put you at a greater risk for a heart attack or stroke, and can also lead to death if left untreated. To treat, try losing weight and increasing your muscle tone.

Movement Disorders in Sleep

Restless leg syndrome is a pulling, aching or crawling sensation under the skin of the calves. Moving your legs can temporarily relieve this feeling. You can also try doing leg exercises during the day, cold compresses, massage or medication.

Periodic limb movement disorder occurs only at night. Leg muscles involuntarily contract every 20 to 40 seconds, which causes you to wake up. To treat, your doctor may prescribe medication that either reduces the movements or helps you sleep through them.

Narcolepsy

People with this disorder fall asleep suddenly for five to 10 minutes (or more) when relaxing or even carrying on a conversation. There is no cure, though some treatments can help reduce symptoms.

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