

Overview of Sleep Disorders



Facts about sleep disorders

Loss of sleep can cause problems at home or on the job. It can lead to serious or even fatal accidents. The National Sleep Foundation notes that:

- Between 50 and 70 million U.S. adults have some type of sleep or wakefulness disorder.
- Sleep problems often get worse as you get older.
- Poor sleep cost billions of dollars a year. This is from healthcare expenses and lost productivity.
- Drowsy drivers cause about 40,000 vehicle crashes in the U.S. every year. This includes more than 1,500 deaths.

Types of sleep disorders

There are many types of sleep disorders. They can affect health and quality of life. The disorders include:

- Insomnia
- Sleep apnea
- Sleepwalking
- Bedwetting
- Nightmares
- Night terror
- Restless legs syndrome
- Snoring
- Narcolepsy

Why is sleep important?

Sleep is not just resting or taking a break from busy routines. Sleep is a key part of good health. Getting enough sleep may help the body recover from illness and injury. Not getting enough sleep over a period of time is linked to health problems. They include obesity, diabetes, and heart disease.

The mental benefits of sleep are also important. Sleep problems can make daily life feel more stressful and less productive. Some people with chronic trouble sleeping (insomnia) are more likely to have mental health problems. Sleep problems are also tied to depression. In a research survey, people who had trouble getting enough sleep had trouble doing tasks that use memory and learning.

How much sleep do you need?

Sleep needs vary from person to person. But most healthy adults need about 7 to 9 hours of sleep a night. You may need more or better sleep if you:

- Have trouble staying alert during quiet activities

- Are irritable with coworkers, family, or friends
- Have trouble focusing or remembering facts
- Have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep, or wake up early and can't get back to sleep

Getting treatment for a sleep disorder

For those who suffer from sleep disorders, help is available from many sources. Sleep problems can be treated or managed by different kinds of healthcare providers. You may be treated by a healthcare provider who specializes in any of these:

- Internal medicine
- Gerontology
- Pediatrics
- Family practice
- Pulmonary medicine
- Neurology
- Psychiatry
- Otolaryngology

You can also find a healthcare provider who is certified in sleep medicine by the American Board of Sleep Medicine. Talk with your healthcare provider about finding a sleep disorder program.

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