



25 YEARS
of health
information

Home → Health Topics → Sleep Disorders

URL of this page: <https://medlineplus.gov/sleepdisorders.html>

Sleep Disorders

What is sleep?

Sleep is a complex biological process. While you are sleeping, you are unconscious, but your brain and body functions are still active. They are doing a number of important jobs that help you stay healthy and function at your best. So when you don't get enough quality sleep, it does more than just make you feel tired. It can affect your physical and mental health, thinking, and daily functioning.

What are sleep disorders?

Sleep disorders are conditions that disturb your normal sleep patterns. There are more than 80 different sleep disorders.

Some major types include:

- Insomnia [<https://medlineplus.gov/insomnia.html>] - being unable to fall asleep and stay asleep. This is the most common sleep disorder.
- Sleep apnea [<https://medlineplus.gov/sleepapnea.html>] - a breathing disorder in which you stop breathing for 10 seconds or more during sleep
- Restless leg syndrome [<https://medlineplus.gov/restlesslegs.html>] (RLS) - a tingling or prickly sensation in your legs, along with a powerful urge to move them
- Hypersomnia - being unable to stay awake during the day. This includes narcolepsy, which causes extreme daytime sleepiness.
- Circadian rhythm disorders - problems with the sleep-wake cycle. They make you unable to sleep and wake at the right times.
- Parasomnia - acting in unusual ways while falling asleep, sleeping, or waking from sleep, such as walking, talking, or eating

Some people who feel tired during the day have a true sleep disorder. But for others, the real problem is not allowing enough time for sleep. It's important to get enough sleep every night. The amount of sleep you need depends on several factors, including your age, lifestyle, health, and whether you have been getting enough sleep recently. Most adults need about 7-8 hours each night.

What causes sleep disorders?

There are different causes for different sleep disorders, including:

- Other conditions, such as heart disease [<https://medlineplus.gov/heartdiseases.html>] , lung disease [<https://medlineplus.gov/lungdiseases.html>] , nerve disorders [<https://medlineplus.gov/neurologicdiseases.html>] , and pain [<https://medlineplus.gov/pain.html>]
- Mental illnesses [<https://medlineplus.gov/mentaldisorders.html>] , including depression [<https://medlineplus.gov/depression.html>] and anxiety [<https://medlineplus.gov/anxiety.html>]
- Medicines
- Genetics

Sometimes the cause is unknown.

There are also some factors that can contribute to sleep problems, including:

- Caffeine [<https://medlineplus.gov/caffeine.html>] and alcohol [<https://medlineplus.gov/alcohol.html>]
- An irregular schedule, such as working the night shift
- Aging. As people age, they often get less sleep or spend less time in the deep, restful stage of sleep. They are also more easily awakened.

What are the symptoms of sleep disorders?

The symptoms of sleep disorders depend on the specific disorder. Some signs that you may have a sleep disorder include that:

- You regularly take more than 30 minutes each night to fall asleep
- You regularly wake up several times each night and then have trouble falling back to sleep, or you wake up too early in the morning
- You often feel sleepy during the day, take frequent naps, or fall asleep at the wrong times during the day
- Your bed partner says that when you sleep, you snore loudly, snort, gasp, make choking sounds, or stop breathing for short periods
- You have creeping, tingling, or crawling feelings in your legs or arms that are relieved by moving or massaging them, 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

How are sleep disorders diagnosed?

To make a diagnosis, your health care provider will use your medical history, your sleep history, and a physical exam. You may also have a sleep study (polysomnogram). The most common types of sleep studies monitor and record data about your body during a full night of sleep. The data includes:

- Brain wave changes
- Eye movements
- Breathing rate
- Blood pressure
- Heart rate and electrical activity of the heart and other muscles

Other types of sleep studies may check how quickly you fall asleep during daytime naps or whether you are able to stay awake and alert during the day.

What are the treatments for sleep disorders?

Treatments for sleep disorders depend on which disorder you have. They may include:

- Good sleep habits [<https://medlineplus.gov/healthysleep.html>] and other lifestyle changes, such as a healthy diet and exercise
- Cognitive behavioral therapy or relaxation techniques to reduce anxiety about getting enough sleep
- CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) machine for sleep apnea
- Bright light therapy (in the morning)
- Medicines, including sleeping pills. Usually, providers recommend that you use sleeping pills for a short period of time.
- Natural products, such as melatonin. These products may help some people but are generally for short-term use.
Make sure to check with your health care provider before you take any of them.

Start Here

- About Sleep [<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/sleep/conditioninfo>]

 (Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development)

Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.nichd.nih.gov/salud/temas/sleep/informacion>]

- Brain Basics: Understanding Sleep [<https://www.ninds.nih.gov/health-information/public-education/brain-basics/brain-basics-understanding-sleep>]  (National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke)
- What Are Sleep Deprivation and Deficiency? [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/sleep-deprivation>]  (National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/es/salud/privacion-y-la-deficiencia-de-sueno>]

Diagnosis and Tests

- Sleep Studies [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/sleep-studies>]  (National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/es/salud/estudios-del-sueno>]
- Sleep Study [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/sleep-study/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/estudio-del-sueno/>]

Treatments and Therapies

- Melatonin [<https://familydoctor.org/melatonin/?adfree=true>] (American Academy of Family Physicians)
Also in Spanish [<https://es.familydoctor.org/melatonina/?adfree=true>]
- Sleep Disorder Treatments [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/sleep-disorder-treatments>] 
(National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/es/salud/tratamientos-de-los-trastornos-del-sueno>]
- Sleep Disorders and Complementary Health Approaches [<https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/sleep-disorders-and-complementary-health-approaches>]  (National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health)
- Sleep Education: Sleep Studies and Tests, Treatment, and Support [<https://sleepeducation.org/patients/>] (American Academy of Sleep Medicine)

Related Issues

- 6 Things To Know About Mind and Body Practices for Sleep Disorders [<https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/tips/things-to-know-about-mind-and-body-practices-for-sleep-disorders>]  (National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health)
- Benzodiazepines and Opioids [<https://nida.nih.gov/research-topics/opioids/benzodiazepines-opioids>] 
(National Institute on Drug Abuse)
Also in Spanish [<https://nida.nih.gov/es/areas-de-investigacion/opioides/las-benzodiacepinas-y-los-opioides>]
- Sleep Disorder (Job Accommodations and the Americans with Disabilities Act) [<https://askjan.org/disabilities/Sleep-Disorder.cfm?>] (Office of Disability Employment Policy)
- Sleep Problems and PTSD [https://www.veteranshealthlibrary.va.gov/142,41554_VA] (Department of Veterans Affairs)

Specifics

- Drowsy Driving [<https://www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/drowsy-driving>] (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration)
- Jet Lag Disorder [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/jet-lag/symptoms-causes/syc-20374027?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/jet-lag/symptoms-causes/syc-20374027?p=1>]
- Kleine-Levin Syndrome [<https://rarediseases.info.nih.gov/diseases/3117/kleine-levin-syndrome>] 
(Genetic and Rare Diseases Information Center)
- Learn about Sleep Disorders [<https://sleepeducation.org/sleep-disorders/>] (American Academy of Sleep Medicine)
- Narcolepsy [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/narcolepsy>]  (National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/es/salud/narcolepsia>]
- Narcolepsy [<https://www.ninds.nih.gov/health-information/disorders/narcolepsy>] 
(National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke)
- Sleep Talking (Somniloquy) [<https://sleepeducation.org/sleep-disorders/sleep-talking/>] (American Academy of Sleep Medicine)

- Sleep Terrors (Night Terrors) [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/sleep-terrors/symptoms-causes/syc-20353524?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/sleep-terrors/symptoms-causes/syc-20353524?p=1>]
- Sleepwalking [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/sleepwalking/symptoms-causes/syc-20353506?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
- What Are Circadian Rhythm Disorders? [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/circadian-rhythm-disorders>]  (National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/es/salud/trastornos-del-ritmo-circadiano>]

Genetics

- Narcolepsy: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/narcolepsy>]  (National Library of Medicine)

Statistics and Research

- FastStats: Sleep Health [<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/sleep-health.htm>] (National Center for Health Statistics)
- Sleep Facts and Stats [<https://www.cdc.gov/sleep/data-research/facts-stats/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Narcolepsy [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Narcolepsy%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Sleep Disorders [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Sleep+Disorders%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Sleep Initiation and Maintenance Disorders [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Sleep+Initiation+and+Maintenance+Disorders%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Sleeping Pills [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?intr=%22Sleep+Aids+Pharmaceutical%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: A randomized trial of adapted versus standard versions of the Transdiagnostic... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40634991>]
- Article: Effect of intraoperative low-dose esketamine infusion on postoperative sleep disturbance after... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40597585>]
- Article: Prediction of antioxidant capacity, age, and sex on sleep impairment in... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40595276>]
- Sleep Disorders -- see more articles [[https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Sleep+Aids%2C+Pharmaceutical%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+OR+%22Sleep+Wake+Disorders%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bedat%5D+AND+%28patient+education+handout%5Bpt%5D+OR+guideline%5Bpt%5D+OR+clinical+trial%5Bpt%5D%29++NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bs%5D+\]](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Sleep+Aids%2C+Pharmaceutical%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+OR+%22Sleep+Wake+Disorders%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bedat%5D+AND+%28patient+education+handout%5Bpt%5D+OR+guideline%5Bpt%5D+OR+clinical+trial%5Bpt%5D%29++NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bs%5D+)

Reference Desk

- Hypersomnia [<https://www.ninds.nih.gov/health-information/disorders/glossary-neurological-terms#hypersomnia>]  (National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke)

Find an Expert

- American Academy of Sleep Medicine [<https://aasm.org/>]
- Find a Sleep Center [<https://sleepeducation.org/sleep-center/>] (American Academy of Sleep Medicine)

- National Center on Sleep Disorders Research [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/about/divisions/division-lung-diseases/national-center-sleep-disorders-research>] 

- National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute [<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/>] 

Children

- Bruxism (Teeth Grinding or Clenching) (For Parents) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/bruxism.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/bruxism.html>]
- Nightmares and Night Terrors [<https://familydoctor.org/condition/nightmares-and-night-terrors/?adfree=true>] (American Academy of Family Physicians)
Also in Spanish [<https://es.familydoctor.org/condicion/pesadillas-y-terrores-nocturnos-en-los-ninos-es/?adfree=true>]
- Sleep Study (Polysomnogram) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/sleep-study.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/sleep-study.html>]
- What to Do if You Can't Sleep (For Kids) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/cant-sleep.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/kids/cant-sleep.html>]

Teenagers

- Common Sleep Problems (For Teens) [<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/sleep.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
- Delayed Sleep-Wake Phase Disorder in Teens [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/delayed-sleep-teens.html>] (Nemours Foundation) - **In English and Spanish**
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/delayed-sleep-teens.html>]

Women

- Sleep and Women [<https://sleepeducation.org/sleep-women-health/>] (American Academy of Sleep Medicine)
- Sleep Problems [<https://www.fda.gov/consumers/womens-health-topics/sleep-problems>]
Easy-to-Read (Food and Drug Administration)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.fda.gov/consumers/free-publications-women/problemas-del-sueno-sleep-problems>]

Patient Handouts

- Changing your sleep habits [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000757.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000757.htm>]
- Drowsiness [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003208.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003208.htm>]
- Idiopathic hypersomnia [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000803.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000803.htm>]
- Irregular sleep-wake syndrome [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000806.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000806.htm>]
- Medicines for sleep [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000758.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000758.htm>]
- Narcolepsy [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000802.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000802.htm>]
- Nightmares [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003209.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003209.htm>]
- Sleep and your health [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000871.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000871.htm>]
- Sleep disorders [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000800.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000800.htm>]
- Sleep paralysis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000801.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)

Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000801.htm>]

- Teenagers and sleep [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000872.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000872.htm>]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

[Changing your sleep habits](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000757.htm) [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000757.htm>]

[Drowsiness](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003208.htm) [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003208.htm>]

[EEG](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003931.htm) [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003931.htm>]

[Idiopathic hypersomnia](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000803.htm) [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000803.htm>]

[Irregular sleep-wake syndrome](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000806.htm) [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000806.htm>]

[Jet lag prevention](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000719.htm) [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000719.htm>]

[Medicines for sleep](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000758.htm) [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000758.htm>]

[Narcolepsy](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000802.htm) [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000802.htm>]

[Night terrors in children](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000809.htm) [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000809.htm>]

[Nightmares](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003209.htm) [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003209.htm>]

[Polysomnography](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003932.htm) [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003932.htm>]

[Problems sleeping during pregnancy](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000559.htm) [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000559.htm>]

[Sleep and your health](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000871.htm) [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000871.htm>]

[Sleep disorders](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000800.htm) [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000800.htm>]

[Sleep disorders in older adults](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000064.htm) [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000064.htm>]

[Sleep paralysis](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000801.htm) [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000801.htm>]

[Sleepwalking](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000808.htm) [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000808.htm>]

[Teenagers and sleep](https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000872.htm) [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000872.htm>]

Related Health Topics

[Healthy Sleep](https://medlineplus.gov/healthysleep.html) [<https://medlineplus.gov/healthysleep.html>]

[Insomnia](https://medlineplus.gov/insomnia.html) [<https://medlineplus.gov/insomnia.html>]

[Restless Legs](https://medlineplus.gov/restlesslegs.html) [<https://medlineplus.gov/restlesslegs.html>]

[Sleep Apnea](https://medlineplus.gov/sleepapnea.html) [<https://medlineplus.gov/sleepapnea.html>]

National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Sleep Disorders* is the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute [<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/>]

Other Languages

Find health information in languages other than English [<https://medlineplus.gov/languages/sleepdisorders.html>] on *Sleep Disorders*

NIH MedlinePlus Magazine

'Why Can't I Sleep?!" [<https://magazine.medlineplus.gov/article/why-cant-i-sleep>]

MedlinePlus links to health information from the National Institutes of Health and other federal government agencies. MedlinePlus also links to health information from non-government Web sites. See our [disclaimer](#) [<https://medlineplus.gov/disclaimers.html>] about external links and our [quality guidelines](#) [<https://medlineplus.gov/criteria.html>].

The information on this site should not be used as a substitute for professional medical care or advice. Contact a health care provider if you have questions about your health.

[Learn how to cite this page](#)