

Sleep Disorders

Some health conditions, medications and sleep disorders affect the quantity and quality of sleep. There are over 80 different sleep disorders, most of which can be successfully treated. Sleep problems such as snoring, sleep apnea, insomnia or restless legs syndrome are common, especially in middle-aged adults. However, many children have sleep issues, some which will go away and others that will get worse if not treated.

Inability or unwillingness to get healthy sleep is a serious problem that should be discussed with a doctor—particularly as poor sleep is associated with other health problems.

Snoring

Snoring is a breathing noise that occurs during sleep and can be very disruptive to you and your family. While breathing in, the air passage between the upper soft palate and the throat or base of the tongue opens and closes. As muscles relax, there is a partial obstruction to the air passage causing the tissues to vibrate and make noise. Enlarged or swollen tonsils or adenoids may cause a person to snore. Loud snoring is also one common symptom of sleep apnea.

Obstructive Sleep Apnea

Obstructive sleep apnea is a serious sleep and breathing disorder. The airway becomes blocked during sleep causing breathing to pause or stop. As a result, oxygen levels drop and the brain is alerted to wake up the body.

These “apneic events” cause gasps and arousals so that breathing can resume. They may last 10-60 seconds and occur as often as 20-60 or more times per hour. Snoring and choking sounds usually accompany them.



It's estimated that 1 to 4 percent of children suffer from sleep apnea, many of them being between 2 and 8 years old. It is more common those who snore, are overweight, have high blood pressure or physical abnormalities in their upper airways. Sleep apnea typically requires treatment, and is associated with daytime sleepiness, stunted growth, and learning problems.

Other Signs of Sleep Apnea

- Bed-wetting
- Sleepwalking
- Behavioral and attention problems
- Morning headaches
- Frequent nighttime urination
- Dry mouth or throat in the morning
- Lack of concentration
- Memory impairment

Insomnia

Insomnia is a very common sleep problem characterized by complaints of inadequate or poor quality sleep. Insomnia can be experienced over time in response to a life change or unusual pressures, which cause stress or anxiety.

Symptoms of insomnia include:

- Difficulty falling asleep—especially if it takes you 30 minutes or longer
- Frequent awakenings during the night
- Waking too early and can not go back to sleep
- Waking feeling unrefreshed or still groggy in the morning.

Narcolepsy

Narcolepsy is a rare and chronic, but treatable neurological disorder that impairs the brain's ability to regulate sleep. A person with untreated narcolepsy experiences excessive daytime sleepiness and may fall asleep in the middle of eating dinner, talking to friends, or at other times when he or she wants to be awake. With treatment, however, people with narcolepsy can lead normal lives.

For sleep centers in your area visit

<http://www.sleepeducation.org/find-a-facility>

For dentists that specialize in sleep apnea visit

<http://www.aadsm.org>