



You Can...Get the Sleep You Need

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Are you “sleep-deprived”?

If you answer yes to any of the following questions, you may not be getting enough good quality sleep.

- Do you feel sleepy, grumpy or "down" during much of the day?
- Do you fall asleep as soon as your head "hits the pillow"?
- Do you sleep less than 7 hours every night?
- Do you still feel tired even after having 8 hours of sleep or more?

Sleep disorders are conditions that prevent restful sleep. Insomnia, the most common sleep disorder, is defined as having trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or having poor quality sleep.

There is a reason for most cases of insomnia.

- A disease or medical condition (such as arthritis) or a mood disorder (such as depression)
- Medications
- Behavior such as drinking alcohol or caffeine or having irregular sleep schedules
- Sleep disorders such as sleep apnea
- Inactivity
- Stress

But take heart, you CAN get a good night's sleep.

Treat symptoms first

MS symptoms such as spasticity, frequent trips to the bathroom (nocturia), or periodic limb movements in sleep (PLMS) can disturb sleep.

MS symptoms and sleep problems can feel difficult to untangle. For example, MS fatigue can be confused with lack of sleep.

Speak to your physician about treatments to manage these sleep-disturbing symptoms. Then review bedtime habits.

What are "good sleep habits"?

- Regularity is key. Go to bed and get up at the same time every day—and no more than one hour later on weekends. Regularity helps set your biological clock
- Clear your mind before bed. Do you rehash the day's problems or worry about tomorrow once you are in bed? It may help to write a list of today's worries and things to do tomorrow well before bedtime.
- Create a bedtime ritual to signal the body and mind to slow down. Change into bedclothes, wash up and brush your teeth at least an hour before sleep. With that done, your ritual can start. It might be listening to music, reading, or writing in a journal.
- Urinate before going to bed. Don't drink a lot of fluids just before bedtime.
- Make sure your bedroom is cool, quiet and dark.
- Try a relaxation technique that you like (breathing, imagery or muscle relaxation) once the lights are off.
- Use your bedroom for sleeping and sex only. Don't read, watch TV, or talk on the phone in bed.
- If you don't fall asleep within 15-20 minutes... get up. Don't stay in bed and watch the clock. Do something boring and relaxing (read something light or watch an old movie).

Other ideas that can help

- Exercise about 4-6 hours before bedtime. Exercise is a stimulant, so don't exercise close to bedtime.
- Limit your caffeine use to the morning. Don't use alcohol and nicotine within 6 hours of bedtime.
- Some medications interfere with sleep. Check your prescriptions, over the counter meds, and any supplements you use with your doctor.
- Depression and emotional problems can keep you up— and more. Ask for a referral to a mental-health professional.

Are you spending enough time in bed but still waking up tired or feeling sleepy during the day?

If MS symptoms are under control and self-help isn't working, consider asking for a referral to a sleep specialist.

Sleep is vital to well being for everyone. Research reports that most adults need eight hours of sleep for learning, memory and problem solving. Sleep is also important for the heart and vascular system and it helps regulate hormones that effect immune function, blood sugar, and weight. A chronic lack of sleep also increases the risk for diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular disease, and mood disorders.

Take sleep seriously—and you CAN sleep on it! Pleasant dreams!