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Common Causes for Sleep Disturbances and Disorders

Age Factors Into Sleep Disorders

Sleeping is a natural part of your life that you probably took for granted growing up. Once you are nearing retirement age however, this natural ability to fall asleep and stay asleep slowly loses its grip on you. Many older adults have problems sleeping and some just deal with it and think it is a part of the process of growing older. There are some steps you can take to increase your chances of getting a good night's sleep.

First of all, as we grow older, the body produces less of the chemicals that help your body recognize when it's time to sleep and wake up. The main ingredient in this chemical makeup is melatonin. When this key chemical decreases, your inner clock, or circadian rhythm, is thrown off. You might find that you never really fall into a deep, restful sleep because you are waking up several times a night or have trouble even falling asleep or waking too early. This can be quite frustrating considering that you need the same amount of sleep that you did before. You sometimes might have to take naps to compensate for your tiredness during the day.

Getting older doesn't necessarily mean that you automatically have a sleep disorder or anything. Sometimes, there are a few things you can try that can help alter your sleep patterns. One of those things relates to the above paragraph where melatonin was referenced. You can buy melatonin in pill form from a pharmacy.

After getting the o.k. from your doctor, follow the instructions for taking the melatonin, but be patient as it might take a few days for it to be really effective. The melatonin has been helpful for some people in "reprogramming" the body to recognize its own circadian rhythms.

Sometimes, it is a matter of changing your sleeping habits in order to get a good night's sleep. One of the many suggestions doctors will tell older adults is to develop a bedtime routine and stick to it, even when traveling. You are training your body to expect sleep at a certain time, which will help improve your sleep patterns. Here are a few more suggestions for older adults in regards to getting a good, restful sleep:

Exercise is important, not only for your health, but also improving sleep. Because sleep is a rejuvenator, exercise can tire your body enough to where it needs that sleep to recuperate.

Keep your sleeping area cool, dark and quiet. Many older adults experience many body changes like menopause, so hot flashes are sometimes the norm. Keeping cool allows your body to advance from drowsiness to sleep. Dark and quiet time simulates the night, which helps keep your circadian rhythms in check.

Choose several relaxing activities and incorporate them into your bedtime routine. Soft music, a good book and even a glass of warm milk are all great ideas. Warm milk is especially helpful as it contains tryptophan, which is a natural sleep aid.

Journaling your day also helps you put your thoughts and worries on paper, so that your mind isn't clouded at bedtime. Stress and obsessing over events that happened in your day are several things that interfere with sleep patterns.

The problem with getting older is that you sometimes end up with additional health issues. These health issues can get in the way of a good night's sleep. Arthritis, heart problems, reflux and stroke are just a few of the many conditions that play a part in insomnia and other sleep disorders. Medications for these conditions and others like diabetes, cancer and Alzheimer's disease are also culprits.

Depression plays a role in sleeplessness as do chronic pain conditions. Talking with your doctor is important. Between the two of you, you can create a game plan which may or may not include sleep medications.

Just know that getting older does not mean you have to needlessly suffer from lack of sleep or rest. It is not normal and you have to be proactive in your approach to solve the problem. Whether it is simple lifestyle changes or something more major like medications to induce sleep, you have choices available to you for getting that restful sleep you need.

Caffeine – Cure or Cause for Sleep Disorders

Caffeine is a drug that is found in many food drinks and medicine. It is colorless and lends very little flavor to whatever it is added to. When in its pure form it is white and very bitter.

Medically, caffeine is useful as a cardiac stimulant and also as a mild diuretic used to increase urine production. It is more commonly used to provide a boost of energy or heightened alertness. It's often used to stay awake longer. College students and drivers use it to stay awake late into the night. Many people feel as though they cannot function in the morning without a cup of coffee to provide caffeine and the boost it gives them.

Caffeine is an addictive drug. It does many things including operating using the same mechanisms that amphetamines, cocaine, and heroin use to stimulate the brain. On a spectrum, caffeine's effects are milder than amphetamines, cocaine and heroin, but it is manipulating the same channels, and that is one of the things that give caffeine its addictive qualities. If you feel like you cannot function without it and must have it every day, then you are addicted to caffeine.

Because of the physiological effects of caffeine, it has been linked to many sleeping disorders, namely insomnia. Insomnia occurs when you have difficulty sleeping. Many cannot sleep at all. Usually its effects last for only a few nights, but it is possible for the symptoms to continue for months and even years.

Insomnia can be caused by several factors, including psychiatric problems, continual stress, use of drugs or alcohol, a lack of exercise, excessive noise or light, and certain physical illnesses. However caffeine is the most common cause for this sleeping disorder.

If your sleep has been disturbed for more than a few weeks and interferes with your ability to function normally during the day, consult your doctor or make an appointment at a reputable sleep disorder to get some treatment.

Caffeine may also interrupt your normal sleep cycle. Caffeine directly affects your kidneys. It may cause kidney infections and/or urinary track infections. These infections may also cause difficulty sleeping. You may also have to get up several times in the night to relieve your bladder. This will cause interruption of your REM sleep cycle, therefore making you tired when you get up in the morning.

Reducing your intake of caffeine will reduce or eliminate this problem. Try switching to decaffeinated drinks. Caffeine does not change the flavor, so you should not notice anything different in the flavor. You may also consider drinking a glass of water before going to sleep at night to flush out your kidneys.

If you are already addicted to caffeine then you may want to consider doing the exact opposite. While giving up caffeine forever is the best option, it does not happen overnight. If you are addicted to caffeine there are ways to make caffeine work for you. Some people who have a caffeine addiction try drinking a cup of coffee about an hour before going to sleep. This usually mellows out their system. This works only because their body has become dependent on caffeine and requires it to function even in sleep.

If caffeine is still causing you problems when trying to sleep, there are other alternatives. You can try over the counter sleeping pills or even something as simple as warm milk. Over the counter sleeping pills have chemicals that make your body start to sleep. They can overpower caffeine and most other cause of sleeping disorders. Warm milk has lactic acid in it. When warmed, this acid releases a chemical that triggers your natural sleep cycle. Haven't you ever noticed that a baby goes to sleep right after you feed it some warm milk?

Scientists have argued for years on whether or not caffeine causes sleeping disorders. They may never know for sure, but regardless of what they say, only you know what your body does. You can fix it if you just pay attention. Your body will tell you what it needs; it is up to you to deliver those needs. In the end, caffeine or not, you can make yourself have a normal sleep cycle.

Do Naps Negate Good Sleep? Get Some Answers

Naps have differing effects on adults and babies. According to research and the experiences of mothers, the length and quality of naps affects nighttime sleep and nighttime sleep affects naps for babies. For adults, naps can be beneficial if you find it hard to get a continuous period of sleep at night long enough to sustain you all day long.

Timing is everything when it comes to naps. Naps too late in the day will affect your baby's night sleep. Certain times are better than others to nap because they suit your baby's biological clock. These periods balance sleep and wake time to affect night sleep in the best way.

Generally, the best times for your baby to nap are determined by the amount of naps he or she takes per day. If your child takes three naps per day, they should be taken mid morning, early afternoon, and early evening. For a two-nap baby, mid morning and early afternoon times are suggested. If your child is down to one nap, early afternoon generally works best.

It is recommended that you put your child down for a nap when you first notice signs of sleepiness. If you wait too long, your child may become wired, overtired, cranky, and have the inability to fall asleep. Wait for cues from your baby that say he or she is ready for a nap. These may include decreased activity, quieting down, rubbing eyes, eyes glazed over, fussing, yawning, and needing a pacifier or bottle to go to sleep. Get your baby down for a nap as soon as possible rather than deal with a fussy child.

For adults, naps can be beneficial or detrimental depending on whether you have a hard time falling asleep or not. If you do, don't take naps during the day but if you must, make them no longer than 30 minutes. Naps will be beneficial to you if you find yourself during the day unable to get an uninterrupted sleep cycle at night long to enough to keep you alert enough all day long. If your busy lifestyle won't allow you to get adequate rest at night, take a nap. Thirty percent of Americans nap four or more times per week.

Naps have many health benefits besides making you feel refreshed. Naps are great stress relievers. Studies show that your risk for heart disease drops significantly by taking regular 30 minute naps. Taking naps can strengthen your ability to pay close attention to detail and make critical decisions. Limit your naps to 15-30 minutes at a time. Longer naps will cause our bodies to fall into deep sleep, which make it difficult to wake from.

For the very sleep-deprived, don't take naps longer than one and a half hours. A 30-minute nap is enough to recharge your whole nervous system and leave you feeling refreshed. If you nap in the middle of the day, be consistent and nap every day. An irregular schedule may throw off your internal clock. Brief daily naps are better for you than sleeping in or taking long naps on the weekends. Napping late in the afternoon is not healthy and makes falling asleep in the evening delayed and could possibly shift your biological clock.

In work-related sleep studies, afternoon naps can boost safety and productivity. Humans are biologically programmed to be sleepy twice a day, between 3 a.m. and 5 a.m. and 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. An afternoon nap will maximize alertness.

In insomnia populations, refraining from taking naps has been suggested for enhancing sleep on the following night. Excessive napping may be a signal of an underlying sleep disorder such as obstructive sleep apnea. Individuals with depression may also spend much time in bed even if they are not necessarily sleeping.

Many employers are beginning to approve of their employees taking naps at work. The benefits of reducing costs, related to employee errors attributed to sleep deficiency, are the catalyst. Employees who are under slept, or sleep deprived, are at a higher risk for errors and accidents, absenteeism, drug use, turnover, and decreased productivity. Corporate America is also looking to reduce higher group insurance premiums. Many companies may soon institute power naps as a benefit for their paid employees.

To Nap or Not to Nap – That is the Question

To nap or not to nap, that is the question. There is a great debate as to whether or not napping ultimately hurts or helps you. Did you know that most mammals do not have sleep patterns like humans? In fact, most mammals nap off and on all day and all night long. Meanwhile, you and many other people recognize a distinct daytime and a distinct nighttime when sleep should happen.

But what happens when that sleep is interrupted in any way? The result is that you might feel tired the next day and catch yourself nodding off. In other words, you are sleep-deprived. Some people believe that taking a short nap during the day will not hurt your chances of a good night's sleep. Another group believes that taking a nap during the day will affect your sleep patterns at that night. So who is right and who is wrong? The answer could be both of them.

When it comes to nap time, there are those people who take a nap the same time every day, like toddlers or senior citizens. Some people like to nap when they know ahead of time that some thing might keep them up late into the night. They are trying to accumulate some rest during the day in anticipation of that late night.

When you are sleep deprived, sometimes you just have to take a nap or you would be unable to function and perform certain activities. If you did shift work, chances are that you are one of many who take naps wherever you can to get some rest in order to function in your job. The same applies to many doctors, especially the young medical residents.

If you support taking naps, then you might be aware that a short thirty-minute snooze could heighten your awareness and improve your performance in your job. Your memory recall improves and your stress level drops. People with heart disease have had their symptoms ease up thanks to napping. Basically, thanks to naps, your "batteries" basically recharge and get you through until bedtime. People in Latin cultures are known for their siestas during the day. They are also known for their lower stress levels and blood pressure.

So if you decide to take a nap during the day, there are a few guidelines to make the most of your brief time. First of all, naps should be fairly short, about twenty to thirty minutes is the best for a quick pick-me-up. You'll notice that short naps make you feel energized. Secondly, timing is everything when it comes to napping – too late in the day interferes with bed time and too early just plain interferes with your scheduled activities. Third, you have to take a nap in a quiet place, preferably your bedroom.

If you are a nap time supporter, then you have probably heard about the power nap movement. Nap supporters feel that since many people get breaks at work, they should use that break time to recharge their energies instead of grabbing a snack or drink. Mental acuity is greatest during the day after a restful period. These nap supporters have just one problem – corporations see sleeping in the middle of the day as wrong and lazy. They don't see the potential rewards they could be reaping from a short mid-day nap.

Of course, with every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. In other words, there are detractors of nap-time. If you are one of those detractors, then you might be aware that you are not functioning at one hundred percent immediately after napping. The full benefits of that

midday nap may not be realized until at least thirty minutes after waking up. This delay could affect anyone in a high task-oriented job, like anything having to do with moving machinery parts or welding. You might also feel that napping, especially in the afternoon, affects your bedtime and quality of sleep you need in order to get through the following day.

The issue of "to nap or not to nap" is largely subjective due to the fact that each person has different needs and tolerances to catching a few snoozes. Only you can decide what the best course for you to take is.

Health Woes Can Contribute to Sleep Disorders

Sleep disorders can be caused by a variety of health conditions as well as a number of different types of medications. Some of these conditions include respiratory problems, heartburn, sleep apnea, and arthritis and leg disorders.

Many respiratory problems can cause a person to have trouble breathing throughout the night and/or can cause them to wake up too often to guarantee a restful night's sleep. Some of these conditions include allergies, asthma, bronchitis, emphysema, chronic sinusitis and the common cold. A number of antibiotics that are prescribed to treat these conditions can often lead to insomnia. If you find it necessary to take any one of these medications discuss with your doctor your concerns about your sleep and see if he/she can devise a "dosage schedule" to avoid any sleep related problems.

Heartburn (also sometimes referred to as gastro-esophageal reflux) takes place when stomach acid from partially digested food makes it way into the esophagus, throat or mouth. This problem makes it difficult for a person to fall asleep or stay asleep, especially if he/she has eaten a heavy meal right before bedtime that consisted of either greasy or spicy foods. The most common symptoms of heartburn are a burning feeling in the chest or throat and pain in the abdominal area.

There are ways to decrease your chances of suffering from heartburn. These ways include ceasing eating within three or four hours before you go to bed, quitting smoking, cutting down on your consumption of alcohol, foods or drinks that contain caffeine (such as coffee, sodas or chocolate), fatty foods and foods that contain a lot of acid. Another suggestion is to raise the head of your bed approximately six inches, for example with blocks of wood. Sleeping on your left side should also help somewhat if heartburn is a problem for you.

Sleep apnea is a condition involving disrupted breathing where an individual can stop breathing all together for anywhere from ten to sixty second intervals many times throughout the course of a night (some people experience it hundred of times as they sleep). Left untreated, this sleep disorder can become very serious and lead to such health problems as heart disease, stroke or high blood pressure. Interestingly enough the majority of people who suffer from sleep apnea are not aware that they have a problem. The most common symptoms of sleep apnea include headaches and chronic tiredness throughout the day and loud snoring.

Arthritis is a health woe that can contribute to a sleep disorder. A considerable amount of pain and stiffness is associated with this disease, which can make it difficult for a person to get comfortable in bed and to both fall and stay asleep. Many arthritis sufferers commonly experience sleep related problems. In order to remedy this problem, engaging in a regular exercise plan (even if it is only walking) and taking pain relieving medication can help in making the joints of the body more mobile and thus bring about a certain amount of relief.

Leg disorders such as restless leg syndrome (RLS) and developing cramps (such as the "oh so painful" charley horse) at night are no fun and can cause problems with having a restful sleep. Pains in the legs are a common problem among many age groups but particularly among senior citizens.

Older adults can sometimes find it more difficult to sleep due to changes that occur to sleep hormones in the body as they age. Research into hormones has found that the process of aging causes an imbalance in the hormones that are responsible in part for the quality of sleep we all receive. This might explain why sleeping disorders are so widespread with older adults.

It is well known that both caffeine and nicotine are two drugs that cause problems with sleep patterns. However many other kinds of medication have been shown to bring on insomnia. Some of these meds include prescription diet pills and any other drugs that list amphetamine as a main ingredient, antidepressants, antihypertensive medications, oral contraceptives, beta blockers, steroids, bronchodilating drugs, nasal decongestants and tranquilizers.

Substance abuse of any kind can result in the development of a sleep disorder. Studies have proven that approximately fifteen percent of people who are plagued by chronic insomnia also abuse alcohol, sedatives or cocaine.

Insomnia Instigators – Causes and Concerns

Insomnia can be described in several different ways. It is the failure to fall asleep or stay asleep. Insomnia can also be described as the inability of waking up from your sleep feeling rested and refreshed. The most popular definition of insomnia can be described as a hybrid of those first two explanations. Insomnia is a condition in which an individual fails to get sufficient sleep in order to feel rested.

Regardless of which definition fits you the best, millions of people suffer from it. You can be affected for just a few nights or suffer for years. Long-term insomnia is not the norm however. Rather, many people might suffer insomnia intermittently, depending on the stress in their lives or a particular health condition.

If you are not waking up feeling rested or you have difficulty falling asleep, you just might have insomnia. But do you have any idea of other symptoms that could indicate insomnia? Here is a brief list:

- Feeling irritable or being in a bad mood
- Trouble falling asleep and staying asleep

- Waking multiple times at night or waking up too early
- Concentration difficulties or daytime grogginess
- Sleep that is unfulfilling and not restful

Without paying heed to your insomnia and seeking treatment, you could end up a variety of health and life issues. You could be more susceptible to illnesses or take longer to get over an illness. Depression can develop in people who do not derive enough rest from their sleep. When you sleep, it should be rejuvenating and restful. If this is not the case, you have to examine your life and try to determine the underlying causes of your insomnia.

For many people with intermittent insomnia, the biggest contributor to this sleep condition is stress. Sometimes, it could be related to work or being unemployed. Other times, it could be something personal like having a baby, a death in the family or divorce. These are the more obvious insomnia instigators. But what if your work and personal life is going along pretty well and you still have sleep issues? A physical by your doctor is probably in order.

You could have an underlying medical condition that is hindering your sleep. Allergies and asthma are two culprits as are sleep apnea and headaches. The medications you take for illnesses like diabetes or heart conditions could also be a factor. Ask your doctor or pharmacist about the side effects of the medications you take.

There are a number of techniques and ideas to help you get through your insomnia. It is just a matter of determining what might best work with those insomnia instigators. If it is stress-related, behavior modification techniques could be beneficial. These could be anything from changing your sleeping environment to visual imagery to strict bed scheduling.

Yoga and other exercises along with deep breathing techniques also help. But what if it is related to health issues, specifically some medications you take? It is not always in your best interests to change medications or stop them all together. When this is the scenario, you might find sleep medications work best to get you through the insomnia.

While you are working through the various techniques and tips to try to combat your insomnia, there are a few things you can do that might help make your situation more conducive to sleep. For instance, stop drinking any liquids at least two hours before bedtime. Potty breaks are one of the problems that contribute to insomnia. Limit your caffeine intake as well as alcohol and smoking.

Try not to take naps and institute some form of exercise in your daily activities. Take the television out of the bedroom. Focus on the fact that the bedroom is only for sleeping and other extra-curricular activities. And speaking of those extra-curricular activities, sex is a great stress release and just might help you in the snoozing department.

If you have trouble falling or staying asleep for any number of reasons, consider that you are suffering from insomnia. Keep a diary or journal of your daily sleep habits for a few weeks. When you visit a doctor about your possible insomnia, the journal is very helpful in pinpointing possible triggers and can help in determining the best course of action for combating that insomnia so you can get a good night's sleep.

Myth Busting Sleep Disorders

The definition of a sleep disorder from a clinical point of view is, “a disruptive pattern of sleep that may include difficulty falling or staying asleep, falling asleep at inappropriate times, excessive total sleep time, or abnormal behaviors associated with sleep.” Doctors and specialists who study sleep have identified approximately one hundred different types of sleep disorders.

Sleep disorders are broken down into four categories as delineated by the International Classification of Sleep Disorders. These categories are dyssomnias, parasomnias, medical/psychiatric disorders and proposed sleep disorders. Examples of dyssomnias include a variety of subcategories of insomnia, narcolepsy, obstructive sleep apnea and restless legs syndrome.

Examples of parasomnias include sleepwalking, bruxism (teeth grinding), bedwetting, and primary snoring. Medical/ psychiatric sleep disorders include asthma, peptic ulcers, dementia and degenerative brain disorders. Proposed sleep disorders are disorders that don't fit in any of the other three categories such as short sleepers, long sleepers, subwakefulness syndrome and sleep choking syndrome.

Many myths revolve around sleep and sleep disorders that need to be dispelled. Let's take a closer look at some of the most common myths and bust them!

It is a myth that health problems such as diabetes, depression, hypertension, obesity, etc. have no connection whatsoever to how much sleep a person gets on a regular basis and the quality of sleep the person in question receives. Research has proven time and time again that there is a very real connection between a bad quality of sleep and/or inadequate sleep due to any number of diseases. To use an example, a lack of sleep can inhibit the ability of the body to properly manufacture insulin, thereby bringing on diabetes.

It is a common myth that as you age you require less sleep to function properly. This is not exactly the case. As a general recommendation, seven to nine hours sleep a night is best for most adults, whether they be twenty or fifty although the sleep patterns of people can become different as they get older. However older individuals may actually get less shuteye per night than younger adults because they wake up more often during the night.

On the heels of this myth is the myth that you can somehow “cheat” on the quantity of sleep you are getting. It can be adverse to your health and well being both physically and mentally (for a whole host of reasons) to skimp on your hours of sleep. As well you cannot “save up” your sleep for days when you have more time to sleep in. An average of seven to nine hours a night is advisable.

It is a common myth that insomnia is simply a problem with falling asleep. This is not so. Insomnia is more complex than that and is associated with four specific symptoms which are, as previously mentioned, a difficulty getting to sleep, but also waking up too early in the morning and not being able to fall back to sleep, frequent moments of waking up during the night and a feeling of being tired or somehow “not refreshed” from a night's sleep.

Many people believe that their brain is at rest while they are sleeping. This is not so. The human body rests during sleep while the brain is very much active. During sleep the brain is recharging its batteries and still very much in control of the majority of bodily functions, including breathing. As we sleep we go back and forth between two "sleep states", these being Rapid Eye Movement sleep (abbreviated to REM and the period in which we dream) and Non-Rapid Eye Movement Sleep (or NREM).

It is a myth that sleep deprivation will not affect one's ability to operate a motor vehicle. This is a myth that could prove deadly. It is estimated that approximately 567,000 car accidents that result in 980 highway deaths every year in the United States are related to sleep deprivation.

Doing such things as opening the window, turning on the air conditioner or turning up the radio are only stopgap measures to help keep you awake and alert at the wheel. If you refuse to stop and rest your body eventually your mind will block out the things you have done to stay awake and you will fall asleep at the wheel. This could cost you your life and others as well.

Pain Picks on Sleep-The Why's and How's Are Discussed

Twenty percent of Americans report that some type of pain or discomfort disrupts their sleep a few nights per week or more. This sleep disruption in turn causes degradation of mood, energy level, behavior, and safety. In the NSF's 1997 Survey on Sleeplessness, Pain and the Workplace, it was reported that back pain and other body aches or joint pain were the leading types of pain conditions experienced at night.

The consequences of pain with sleep include: difficulty maintaining alertness, lack of energy, impaired mood, and trouble handling stress. A lack of sleep puts a person at a higher risk for injury, poor health, and accidents. Sleep studies in patients with acute pain, such as postoperative patients, and chronic pain, such as neuropathic & rheumatologic conditions, show frequent arousals, a hard time going back to sleep, and reduced time in REM sleep.

The major causes of sleep loss due to pain are back pain, headaches, facial pain caused by temporomandibular joint (TMJ) syndrome, which is characterized by pain in and around the ears and soreness of the jaw muscles. Also, musculoskeletal pain, which includes arthritis and fibromyalgia, can lead to poor sleep.

Women report problems with visceral and abdominal pain as well as premenstrual cramping. It's important to note that overall impact of visceral and abdominal pain in women is misunderstood. We need more studies in this area. Pain from cancer, the disease itself and its treatment, is also a major offender in causing poor sleep.

The International Association for the Study of Pain delineates 3 major types of pain: (1) acute pain, such as that resulting from an injury; (2) cancer-related pain; and (3) chronic nonmalignant pain. Chronic nonmalignant pain, which may be a result of injury or of unknown causes, is the type of pain most frequently associated with alteration of sleep.

Pain is the major cause of insomnia. Sixty-five percent of pain with sleep sufferers reported being awakened during the night by pain and waking up feeling unrefreshed.

Pain and sleep correlate on so many levels. Chronic pain sufferers experience less deep sleep, more arousals and disruptions, and less efficient sleep. A poor quality of sleep mixed with waking pain creates a vicious cycle that affects mood, energy, behavior, and safety. Pain with sleep sufferers are hardly ever at the top of their game. A full night's sleep leaves a person's mood, energy, and behavior at their maximum potential.

Back pain is the most common type of pain-related sleeplessness. Eighty percent of Americans at some point report having been affected by back pain. One in fifty American workers suffer a back injury and low back pain. Back pain disables some 5.4 million Americans every year. The more severe the pain the more sleep disruption occurs. Sleep disruption seems to make the pain feel worse. So what can be done to stop the madness?

Headaches are the second most common type of pain. Migraines can occur following a period of sleep deprivation or too much sleep. Headaches are also associated with sleep apnea, which is defined as frequent pauses in breathing along with loud snoring during sleep. Cluster headaches are even worse and can impair a good night's sleep as well.

Rheumatic and arthritic disorders also correlate with sleep problems. Osteoarthritis, which affects the hips and knees, causes patients to sleep lighter and have restless sleep. Rheumatoid arthritis patients have disturbed sleep with stiffness in the morning as well as a decrease in energy, weakness, and function.

Flare-ups can lead to arousal of sleep. Fibromyalgia causes aches and pains throughout the entire body. It leaves patients feeling fatigued and unable to feel refreshed. These patients experience light, unrefreshing sleep, daytime fatigue, and problems with thinking and mood. This poor sleep pattern seems to worsen symptoms.

Fibromyalgia can also cause chronic headaches, irritable bowel syndrome, jaw pain, tingling legs, and sleep apnea. The poor sleep quality can be attributed to unrelenting muscle pain, tenderness, and low energy. One study showed the occurrence of sleep apnea in 80% of fibromyalgia patients. Sleep apnea tears the sleep cycle into bits and pieces, thus reducing slow wave sleep.

Sleep problems interact with the disease and pain process. Heart patients have less deep sleep, more fragmented and less efficient sleep. Poor sleep affects other body systems as well. Gastrointestinal problems lead to great difficulty getting a good night's sleep. There are a few pain management methods to consider. Relaxation and stress management, as well as a massage by a licensed physical therapist may help ease the pain. Medications are available but seem to have a limited effect. For best results, consult your medical doctor for a professional treatment plan.

Potty Trips Can Keep You From Sleeping: What Are You Going to Do About It?

Frequent trips to the restroom at night can be caused by a number of things including pregnancy, diabetes, congestive heart failure, or an overactive bladder, among others. Getting up at night interferes with our sleep cycles. Are there any treatment methods to help those who suffer from nighttime wake up calls to get better sleep? Here we will delve deeper into the matter.

During the day, your kidneys clean your body by producing large amounts of urine. When you go to sleep at night, your brain makes lots of a hormone called ADH for short that shuts down your kidneys so you can sleep at night. As you age, the brain's ADH production slows down so many older people have to get up at night to visit the restroom.

Antidiuretic hormone nasal sprays or pills can help these people sleep through the night. Even men who have frequent night-time urination after prostate surgery have reduced levels of ADH and can be cured by taking that hormone at bedtime (1). A potential serious side effect is seizures from taking too much water with HDH (4). So, if you take a 400 mg ADH pill or a single ADH nasal spray at bedtime, do not drink fluids after 6 PM.

The common causes of frequent urination range from the overly simplistic explanation of excessive fluid intake to more complicated scenarios such as congestive heart failure, benign prostatic hyperplasia, diabetes, chronic or recurrent urinary tract infections, or drugs.

If you are pregnant, this can mean lots of trips to the bathroom especially in the first and last trimesters.

Pregnant women and mothers will testify that the quality of sleep in the third trimester is unbearable. Along with the normal discomforts of pregnancy such as heartburn, leg cramps, restless leg syndrome, and snoring, the bladder is under pressure. Like it was during the first trimester when the bathroom was a second home, the baby is positioned right on top of the mother's pelvis.

Pregnant women can reduce their nighttime potty breaks by limiting fluid intake in late afternoon and evening and also completely emptying the bladder every time they visit the toilet. You can cut down on nighttime trips to the bathroom by drinking plenty of fluids during the day but limiting your intake in the hours before you go to bed. Stay away from coffee and tea late in the day.

An overactive bladder may make you feel like you have to get to a bathroom immediately because the bladder muscles act inappropriately and contract involuntarily. You may be experiencing symptoms of an overactive bladder if you get up 8 or more times in a 24-hour period to go to the restroom, if you get up two or more times at night, if you have sudden urges to urinate, and/or if you have wetting accidents.

You can try cutting back on liquids, and wear pads or liners to protect your clothing but there are other ways to deal with this condition and get back to a normal night's sleep. Consult with

your physician about medical treatment. In the meantime, try some Behavioral therapy such as Kegel exercises to help strengthen your pelvic muscles.

Try to retrain your bladder by lengthening the time between visits to the bathroom. Add fifteen minutes to the time between the times you would normally go to the bathroom. If you go every two hours, wait two hours and fifteen minutes the next time and slowly get your bladder trained to make less visits to the bathroom.

Biofeedback is also an option which can teach you how to contract the levator muscle and track when your bladder and urethral muscles contract involuntarily. Drug therapy will help block bladder contractions by relaxing your bladder muscles. Occlusive devices are another option for women, which are urethral inserts and urine seals that help to obstruct urine flow and manage leakage.

Surgery is recommended only as a last resort when drug therapy and bladder retraining have failed. You can also modify your diet to help you get some shut-eye. Avoid or limit foods that contain caffeine, chocolate, and alcohol that make your body produce more urine. Also stay away from foods and beverages that may irritate your bladder such as coffee, tea, chocolate, alcohol, citrus fruits, juices, and high-spice foods.

Drink six to eight glasses of water spread out evenly through the day. If you have problems with constipation or have gained too much weight, this can worsen the symptoms of an overactive bladder. Smoking has been shown to aggravate the bladder so if you're a smoker, try quitting for the sake of your health and your overactive bladder.

Check with your physician or urologist for treatment options and get back to a good night's sleep.

Reasons Why Obesity Causes a Variety of Sleep Disorders

One of the most dangerous problems associated with obesity is sleep apnea. The technical definition of sleep apnea is the body temporarily stops breathing. Sometimes this cessation of breathing is not permanent and you can suffocate in your sleep. This is caused by something blocking the airway to the lungs; usually excess tissue in the mouth or throat, your tongue, over sized tonsils, and the relaxing and constricting of airway muscles. Excess weight on the throat and chest can attribute to these complications.

Here are list of some of the side effects of sleep apnea:

Loud snoring – This is the most common side effect of sleep apnea. This is not just your average snore, this is a loud, deep, wake the dead, snore. You may not hear it, but it is probably a safe bet that your bed partner will notice and make you aware of it.

Morning headaches – Upon waking you have a splitting headache. Sometimes these can progress to migraines. This is the result of a lack of oxygen to the brain.

Non-refreshing sleep – Upon waking you felt as though you have not gotten any sleep. This is caused by your REM sleep cycle being continually interrupted by your body trying to wake you up when you stop breathing. You may not remember actively waking, but your body does wake itself up so you will start breathing again. Your body gets its rest during REM sleep and if this is interrupted, you will not get any useful rest.

Dry mouth upon awakening – This is caused by breathing through your mouth. The air in the room dries out your salivary glands.

High blood pressure – This is caused by your body not getting enough rest. Without enough rest your body can not properly regulate your heart, therefore causing blood pressure issues.

Irritability – Let's face it, when you did not get a good night sleep, anyone can be a bit cranky.

Change in personality – Once you have had several nights of not getting any good sleep, you will become irritable, and your personality will start to change. You will not have the energy to socialize the way you used to. People will think you are mean and rude when you don't mean to be.

Difficulty concentrating – Due to the lack of oxygen to your brain, you will have a number of head problems including headaches. It's because of these that most people have a difficult time concentrating.

Excessive perspiring during sleep – there is just no real nice way to say this, but if you are obese, you have some extra "blanketing" there that keeps you hot.

Heartburn – If you eat before sleeping, you will place a lot of weight on your stomach, this can lead to had heartburn when you wake up

Reduced libido – Your body has not gotten good sleep in a while. Sometime it feels like you are running on empty. Your chemical make up is not at 100%. Your hormones are not properly regulated. Your libido is directly controlled by hormones in the blood.

Frequent nocturnal urination – Your body is more concerned with keeping you alive than it is with keeping your bladder from losing control. Some psychologist will even argue that wetting yourself is a subconscious way of making yourself wake up.

Restless sleep – You keep waking up in the night from not breathing, so you can't get comfortable. You don't get much sleep.

Nocturnal snorting, gasping, choking – This is a direct result of not breathing. This is how your body wakes you up to start breathing.

Death – Your body will do everything in its power to wake you up to start breathing again. Sometimes it fails at waking you up, so you suffocate on your own body and die.

This is just a short list of complications caused by sleep apnea. Sleep apnea is a DIRECT result of being overweight. Isn't scary that you could die in your sleep by choking on your own flesh simply because of its weight? That should be enough to make anyone loose weight, which would fix all these problems. You would sleep better and be healthier. Not to mention you don't have to be scared of choking on your own fat!

Seasonal Depression Can Signal a Sleep Disorder

Who hasn't suffered from the 'winter blues'? We wake in the dark and go to work in the dark, and by the time we fall asleep, it has long been dark. With the cold weather and gloomy skies, it's no surprise that some people suffer from seasonal depression and an overall sense of lethargy.

Seasonal Affective Disorder (or SAD) is a condition that develops when the 'winter blues' become more pronounced and debilitating. SAD affects over 10 million Americans each year. SAD symptoms include fatigue, overall sense of energy, weight gain, an increased appetite (including a craving for sweets), depression, mood swings, and a desire to sleep more. Besides affecting an individual's ability to function normally, SAD can have a strong effect on their ability to get a good night's sleep.

It is estimated that roughly 70-80% of people affected by SAD are women. Most people who are affected by SAD will notice onset of the disorder sometime in their 30s. Research has shown that there is a direct link between the SAD and light exposure. People who live in cold northern climates are much more likely to experience SAD symptoms than people who reside in milder Southern climates.

SAD may affect a person's ability to achieve restful sleep. In fact, many times the symptoms of SAD may indicate a sleep disorder. One cannot be sure if an underlying sleep disorder may cause SAD-type symptoms to become more pronounced, or if SAD may make an individual more apt to develop a sleep disorder. Regardless, researchers have shown that there is an inextricable link between seasonal depression and the inability to get a restful night's sleep.

In fact, SAD may be connected to several sleep disorders, including Delayed Sleep Phase Disorder and Advanced Sleep Phase Disorder. Delayed Sleep Phase Disorder involves the inability to fall asleep, and the urge to sleep late into the morning. Advanced Sleep Phase Disorder involves the feeling of tiring too early in the evening, and waking too early in the morning. Both disorders can be traced to the jarring effect that seasonal depression and other SAD-like symptoms have on the circadian rhythms.

What is the connection between SAD and the ability to sleep? Researchers believe the key is in the amount of light that a person is exposed to on a daily basis. If a person does not receive an adequate amount of light, their circadian rhythm, or sleep-wake cycle, may become disrupted, resulting in lack of restful sleep.

What can be done to counter the effects of SAD and restore normal sleep patterns? There are many therapies now available to individuals who suffer from sleep disorders due to seasonal

depression. Perhaps the most well known of these is light therapy. Light therapy consists of the daily use of a light box. The light device is simply a box outfitted with full spectrum fluorescent lights. Most people will choose to use the light box in the morning, as some people experience insomnia if they use the light box in the evening.

Most people who undergo light therapy will use their light box for roughly 30 minutes to an hour or more. When first using the light box, users must measure the distance between the light and their eyes. The light must reach one's eyes, although one should not stare directly into the lights. It is best to use the light box during long blocks of time, rather than divide the time into shorter sessions. The light therapy box has been proven to help reduce the effects of SAD, and help establish a normal circadian rhythm.

Other types of therapies and treatments that may help individuals overcome the effects of seasonal depression include regular exposure to outdoor light and daily exercise. Even if the sky is gloomy and overcast, research has shown that SAD-affected individuals can benefit from taking daily walks and getting regular exercise.

Getting exposure to light can help stabilize a person's circadian rhythm, and will also help alleviate the effects of SAD-induced sleep disorders. If SAD symptoms are pronounced or severe, an individual may be prescribed anti-depression and anti-anxiety medications, including SSRI drugs such as Paxil and Zoloft. Cognitive psychotherapy may also help relieve the effects of seasonal depression, which in turn may help keep sleep disorders in check.

Six Common Causes of Disruptive Sleep in Children

There are six common causes of disruptive sleep in children and these include sleep deprivation, night waking, sleep-onset associations, separation issues, resistance to sleep/settling problems and parasomnias. Let's take a brief look at each one of these.

Any sleep disorder can lead to sleep deprivation, which can affect a child's physical and mental health as well as his/her performance in school and in other social activities. Sleep deprivation among children is becoming more and more commonplace in our society, to its detriment as it has many debilitating effects on an otherwise healthy child's life.

Night waking refers to times when a child sleeps lightly and/or wakes up without an obvious reason such as discomfort or a loud noise. This is normal if it happens occasionally, as, just like adults, children cannot remain in deep sleep every hour of the night. However when night waking starts becoming the norm or the child consistently has problems falling asleep then treatment is needed.

Sleep-onset associations refer to what children associate with drifting off to sleep (such as being rocked to sleep by a parent or sucking on a soother) and what they also need if they should awaken suddenly in the night. The most positive sleep-onset associations are the ones that don't include parents or anyone else for that matter. To encourage a good night's sleep for your child, put them to bed when they are sleepy but not completely asleep yet.

By putting your child in his/her bed when they are drowsy but still technically awake, they are learning to become independent by going to sleep by themselves. This helps to foster self-confidence in children and a sense of accomplishment. Children with moody or temperamental dispositions generally need the comfort of sleep-onset associations even more so than other children do. The most common problem for disruptive sleep in children is sleep-onset associations.

Separation issues (or separation anxiety) occur most often in children under the age of three. By the time a child reaches eight or nine months old, he/she has come to understand that mom and dad are still around even if they can't see them at that precise moment in time. However it takes a couple more years for their confidence to build about being alone.

As a parent you will know that separation anxiety is the cause of your child's sleeping disorder if they quickly drift back to sleep once you have calmed their fears. Some parents experience separation anxiety from their children and find themselves looking in on them frequently throughout the night.

Sometimes children have a resistance to what is known as "sleep/settling." Basically this means a child who for one reason or another does not want to go to bed and demonstrates this by throwing a tantrum complete with screaming and feet stamping, or consistently thinks of excuses for why he or she is not ready for bed just yet. This can also be seen by kids who simply say to their mothers, "I'm not going to bed because I don't want to."

Parasomnias are sleep-related problems that interrupt proper sleep patterns and include such things as night terrors, nightmares, teeth grinding (bruxism) and bed wetting. If not kept in check, any one of these problems can develop into more serious concerns for both parent and child.

There are other reasons why children have disrupted sleep. Some are very simple and easy to remedy while others are more serious and would require a visit to their doctor. Some children wake up during the night because they are wearing a pair of uncomfortable pajamas and/or are wearing nightwear that has scratchy tags that are irritating their skin; others wake up because of itching from pinworms and discomfort wakes up some children, whether it be in the form of the child having wet their bed, being too cold, too hot, thirsty, hungry or they have to use the toilet.

Yet other reasons include a noise that wakes the child; an allergy or food insensitivity; gastro-esophageal reflux (GER); a bladder infection causing pain and/or a constant need to urinate; allergens in the air and finally, pain from an earache, stomach ache or teeth growing in. Never discount any of these problems but address them as soon as they occur so they don't develop into something worse.

Sleep Apnea Can Cause Disruptive Sleep

Many people believe that sleep apnea is simply another form of snoring. While it is true that sleep apnea is akin to snoring—both can interfere with the quality and amount of sleep—sleep

apnea is a much more serious sleep disorder. Snoring simply involves the sound a person makes while sleeping. Sleep apnea refers to an actual obstruction of breath during sleep. An individual suffering from sleep apnea will stop breathing, sometimes several times a night, and wake up in order to regain breathing.

Individuals who suffer from sleep apnea will usually experience frequent disruptions of sleep during the course of one night's sleep. Most episodes of breathing pauses will last for approximately ten seconds. These breathing pauses can occur up to thirty or more times an hour. As you can imagine, sleep apnea can cause an individual considerable sleep deprivation!

How do you know if you are suffering from sleep apnea? Surprisingly, many people do not know they suffer from sleep apnea. Many times, sleeping partners who observe the individual's stop-and-start breathing patterns alert them of their sleep apnea. Sometimes, it is the accumulated sleep deficit that alerts an individual that something is disrupting their sleep. If you find yourself suffering from excessiveness daytime sleepiness, or if you wake each morning with a strong headache, you should consult with your doctor.

Sleep apnea can occur in all types of individuals, although it appears to occur more often in men. Factors which may raise your chances of suffering from sleep apnea can include, weight, blood pressure, and nose and throat infections or obstructions. Individuals who are overweight or suffer from high blood pressure are more vulnerable to suffer from sleep apnea. Other factors that may contribute to the onset of sleep apnea include excessive alcohol consumption and the use of sleeping pills.

Children are also vulnerable to sleep apnea. Children who snore excessively or experience restless sleep may be suffering from sleep apnea. Many times, enlarged tonsils or adenoids cause a child's sleep apnea.

If you suffer from sleep apnea, the first thing you should do is find out what type of sleep apnea you are suffering from. There are two distinct types of sleep apnea. The most common form of sleep apnea is known as obstructive sleep apnea. This refers to the type of sleep apnea in which the tongue and the throat muscles relax during the course of sleep. When the tongue and throat relax, they block part of the mouth's airway, causing "choking" noise that can result from lack of airflow that usually rouses the individual from sleep. Enlarged tonsils and adenoids may also cause obstructive sleep apnea in an individual.

The second, much less common form of sleep apnea is known as central sleep apnea. Unlike obstructive sleep apnea, which originates in the mouth and throat, central sleep apnea is caused when the brain fails to send the frequent signals to the mouth that control regular breathing. Your doctor may need to conduct a sleep observation to determine which type of sleep apnea, if any, you suffer from.

If it is concluded that you suffer from sleep apnea, most treatments begin with initiating lifestyle changes. People with sleep apnea are encouraged to follow a weight loss program, eat a healthy diet, reduce their alcohol intake, and cease taking sleeping pills. If you tend to sleep on your back, your doctor may advise you to change sleeping positions to encourage normal nighttime breathing. Special position-changing tools may be recommended to help you change your sleeping position.

If changing lifestyle factors or sleeping positions does not work, a special continuous positive airway pressure (known as CPAP) may be used. A CPAP device is a mask that the individual wears over her or his face at night. The CPAP forces air into the individual's airway. Other options include surgery to remove tissue blockage, or enlarge tonsils or adenoids. If an individual's sleep apnea does not respond to conventional treatment, a special surgery known as tracheotomy may be performed. In a tracheotomy, a small hole is cut into the windpipe. The hole is left closed until night, where it can be opened to allow air to enter the individual's airway without obstruction.

Sleep Stress – How NOT to Bug Out Because You Can't Sleep

If you can't sleep because of stress, try a relaxation meditation. This can help distress you and relax you so you can sleep. Here is a good meditation to try. You can either pre record this in your soft voice or memorize it and say it to yourself when you are ready. Most prefer to prerecord it so they can just relax. Lay in bed to do this. Make sure that you are comfortable and that you will not be disturbed. If you fall asleep this is fine.

"Lay there and relax for just a moment. Tighten up the muscles in your feet. Count to three and let go. Tighten up your calves. Count to three and let go. Now tighten up your thighs. Count to three and let go. Tighten up the muscles in your buttocks. Count to three and let go. Your feet are very relaxed. Your legs and lower body are very relaxed. They feel as though they are made of lead. They are very, very, very relaxed. Now tighten up your abdomen. Count to three and let go. Tighten your chest. Count to three and let go. Tighten your lower back Count to three and let go. Now tighten your shoulders. Count to three and let go. Your entire torso is completely relaxed.

If there is any pain anywhere, release it into the ground. Just imagine the pain falling from your body into the ground. Your legs and feet are completely relaxed. Your back is completely relaxed. Your torso and lower body are completely relaxed. Now tighten up your shoulders. Count to three and let go. Tighten your biceps. Count to three and let go. Tighten your lower arms. Count to three and let go. Tighten your hands. Count to three and let go. Tighten your neck. Count to three and let go. Scrunch up your face. Count to three and let go. Your entire body is relaxed. Your face is relaxed. Your arms are relaxed. Your chest and back are relaxed. Your legs and feet are relaxed. Now just let your body sit in its relaxed state and drift into sleep.

Here is another variation of the same meditation:

"Lay there and relax for just a moment. Tighten up the muscles in your feet. Count to three and let go. Tighten up your calves. Count to three and let go. Now tighten up your thighs. Count to three and let go. Tighten up the muscles in your buttocks. Count to three and let go. Your feet are very relaxed. Your legs and lower body are very relaxed. They feel as though they are made of lead. They are very, very, very relaxed.

Now tighten up your abdomen. Count to three and let go. Tighten your chest. Count to three and let go. Tighten your lower back Count to three and let go. Now tighten your shoulders.

Count to three and let go. Your entire torso is completely relaxed. If there is any pain anywhere, release it into the ground. Just imagine the pain falling from your body into the ground. Your legs and feet are completely relaxed. Your back is completely relaxed. Your torso and lower body are completely relaxed.

Now tighten up your shoulders. Count to three and let go. Tighten your biceps. Count to three and let go. Tighten your lower arms. Count to three and let go. Tighten your hands. Count to three and let go. Tighten your neck. Count to three and let go. Scrunch up your face. Count to three and let go. Your entire body is relaxed. Your face is relaxed. Your arms are relaxed. Your chest and back are relaxed. Your legs and feet are relaxed.

Now count to ten. With each number you will become more and more relaxed. With each new number remember to breathe in deep through your nose and out through your mouth.

One; you are very relaxed. Breathe in; breathe out. Two; Breathe in deep relaxation; breathe out extra tension. Three; Breathe in relaxation; breathe out the stress of the day. Four; you are very, very, very relaxed. Five; sleep will come easy tonight. Six; any pain you have anywhere, release it now into the ground. Seven; you are immune to the noises surrounding you. Eight; you are more relaxed than you have ever been in your life. Nine; Breathe in; breathe out. Ten; you may now fall asleep or just lay there in perfect relaxation."

Top Five Conditions That Can Cause Insomnia

Almost everyone has battled with at least a short-term case of insomnia. Some people may be more prone to either transient or long-term, chronic insomnia. Here are the top five conditions that can cause insomnia.

1. Stress, anxiety, and depression. The undisputed number one cause of insomnia is excessive stress, anxiety, and depression. Almost everyone has experienced transient insomnia the night before a job interview, big presentation, wedding, or other significant personal event. Transient insomnia usually passes after the stress-inducing event has been overcome. Chronic insomnia is more serious because it can affect an individual for an extended period of time. Persistent stress at work or home can lead to chronic insomnia. Anxiety and depressive disorders are another major source for chronic insomnia.

2. Sleep apnea, narcolepsy, night leg disorders, and other sleep disorders. One of the most common causes of chronic insomnia is the presence of one or more sleep disorders. Sleep disorders can severely disrupt sleep patterns and interfere with an individual's quality of life.

Sleep apnea is one of the most common sleep disorders (after excessive snoring and chronic insomnia). A person with sleep apnea will stop breathing several times during the course of a night's sleep. The pauses in breathing last about ten seconds, and can occur up to 30 times a night. A person with sleep apnea may not be aware of their condition. But the cumulative effect of waking up several times a night can cause them to lose sleep, leading many sleep apnea patients to conclude they are suffering from chronic insomnia.

Restless leg syndrome is another sleep disorder that can cause severe chronic insomnia. Individuals with restless leg syndrome will experience crawling sensations on their limbs, especially their calves and ankles. The symptoms of restless leg syndrome become magnified during long periods of inactivity, so sufferers will usually experience the majority of symptoms during the night.

Individuals with restless leg syndrome can have a difficult time falling and staying asleep, and may experience significant discomfort. People with restless leg syndrome often experience involuntary jerking of their legs during the course of the night. It's no surprise that restless leg syndrome often causes chronic insomnia and daytime fatigue.

3. Environmental disturbances. Environmental factors such as light, noise, temperature, and partner's sleep habits can severely disrupt the quantity and quality of sleep. Excessive light at night has been shown to disrupt sleep. Very bright artificial light should be avoided, and sensitive sleepers should even avoid dim artificial lighting. Insomnia has also been linked to lack of sufficient light during the day. Studies have shown that individuals who expose themselves to bright daylight may suffer from significantly less sleep disturbances than those who do not get bright daylight.

Noise can obviously also adversely affect a person's ability to get restful sleep. People who live near busy city streets or next to noisy businesses or neighbors may have difficulty achieving a good night's rest. Temperature—too cool or too warm—is another common cause of insomnia. It is recommended that individuals suffering from chronic insomnia experiment with the temperature of their sleeping area until they find the most comfortable sleep setting.

Another common environmental factor that can lead to insomnia has to do with the sleeping arrangements and sleeping partners. A partner's sleeping habits can have a detrimental effect on their bedmates ability to achieve a restful night's sleep. Loud snoring, tossing, and other nighttime habits can alter significantly the amount and quality of a person's sleep. For instance, if one person enjoys watching television in bed or reading before bed, the other person's ability to fall asleep easily and to remain asleep may become compromised.

4. Overuse of alcohol, stimulants, and sleeping aids. The consumption of alcohol, stimulants, and overuse of sleeping aids has been linked insomnia. Alcohol should be avoided several hours before bedtime. Stimulants such as caffeine and cigarettes should also be avoided. Research has shown that the overuse of sleeping pills can also compromise their ability to be effective, and lead to chronic insomnia.

5. The presence of a chronic medical condition, such as arthritis, kidney problems, Alzheimer's disease, and Parkinson's disease. Many medical conditions have been shown to cause insomnia. Medical conditions that cause pain, such as arthritis and kidney disorders, usually cause insomnia. Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease have also been linked to insomnia. Many times, insomnia may be triggered by medications used to control the medical condition.

Weighty Issues – When Your Body Size Becomes Your #1 Sleep Disorder

Being overweight is a very dangerous health problem. It is bad enough that you have back problems, you have very little energy, and your clothes don't fit. Some people have low self esteem and have tried every diet known to man and have still failed to lose weight. You have heart problems and high blood pressure. On top of that even sleeping is a dangerous task. One of the biggest causes of death among overweight people is sleep apnea. Yes. Just by going to sleep your fat can kill you.

Sleep apnea is a medical condition that can result in death if not properly treated. The disorder involves the repeated collapse of the windpipe, which causes a sleeper to awaken slightly due to shortness of breath. People who suffer from sleep apnea often experience daytime drowsiness, poor performance at work and depression. One of the most common and most frightening effects is that you literally stop breathing when this happens.

Sometimes extra skin found in the back of the roof of the mouth will lay on the airway blocking your air passage. This is the most dangerous thing to happen. You may go three or four minutes before your body can wake up to fix this problem. In that three or four minutes you could die.

During your waking moments if oxygen is blocked, in two to three minutes you would pass out as a natural defense. If you don't get any air shortly after this happens you will die. If you are already asleep, your body is already passed out. Your body has to do the exact opposite: wake you up. This conflicts with the body's original defense. This is why so many people die from sleep apnea.

Experts say that sleep apnea occurs when muscles in a person's throat relax excessively during sleep. Once diagnosed, treatment can help prevent or reverse the symptoms. These treatments can include sleep position training, weight loss, exercise, quitting smoking, avoiding alcohol, using special oral or nasal appliances, or surgery.

Sleep apnea does occasionally occur in thin patients, but generally it is only a condition that occurs in overweight people. Very rarely does a smaller patient have the disorder.

Another sleep disorder common among overweight people, although not as deadly is heartburn. Gastro esophageal reflux, or heartburn, is recognized by burning chest pain. Another typical symptom is a sensation of food coming back into the mouth with a bitter, acidic taste. This disorder can also be accompanied by asthmatic breathing, coughing and hoarseness. Occasionally, gastro esophageal reflux can mimic the symptoms of a heart attack, and is often mistaken for one. This disorder is caused by acid "backing up" into the esophagus during sleep. This is easily treatable with medication.

Another sleep disorder common among overweight men is loud snoring. This is not deadly unless you are sleeping with someone else. The snoring won't kill you, but your bed partner may. The more overweight you are they harder and louder you snore. This is because the more overweight you are, the more your airways are being blocked. If you lose some weight, the snoring will lighten or go away.

Loosing weight and creating good eating habits will help reduce or eliminate these three common sleep disorders. Loosing weight is not only good for your health; it is good for your sleep as well. The more weight you loose, the better. As you loose weight, you will notice your sleep becomes more restful. You will awake feeling rested instead of tired. You will breath easier when sleeping. Your heartburn will go away.

Your partner will stop hitting you to stop snoring. You won't wake up sweaty. You won't have back problems. Your dreams will even seem more productive. Most people don't realize that their weight can be a danger to them even in sleep. It can be dangerous, and it should be a big concern. Loose the weight; sleep great. Try it. Not only will you sleep better, but you will feel healthier. You will have more energy. You will be able to look in the mirror and be happy. And you will be able to sleep in peace. All this should be worth the time and energy it takes to loose weight.

When Your Inner Clock Hits the Snooze Button – Interrupted Circadian Rhythms Disrupt Sleep

Maybe you've heard of your 'body clock,' but have never quite understood what it is. When people refer to their inner body clock, they are making reference to their circadian rhythm. Your circadian rhythm is in charge of coordinating your daily sleep-wake cycle. Your body actually has hundreds of circadian rhythms. These cycles control and coordinate your body's varying temperature, heart rate, blood pressure, hormone levels, and numerous other factors that allow you to move about comfortably every day.

Your circadian rhythm operates on a 24-hour cycle. Your brain relies on outside influences (called zeitgebers) such as daylight to set your circadian rhythm each day. Our bodies depend on these external cues to set our internal body clocks. Any time that your circadian rhythm becomes interrupted—for instance, if you experience several nights of sleep deprivation—your circadian rhythm is thrown out of sync.

Unfortunately, many people are unable to keep a steady circadian rhythm because of their employment. People who work at night are particularly vulnerable to this danger. People who work during the nighttime hours interrupt the body's natural biological and psychological rhythms. Many of these individuals may eventually suffer from a circadian rhythm disorder. Other people who are vulnerable to developing a circadian rhythm disorder are people who keep very irregular sleep schedules, those who travel frequently and experience jet lag, and people who simply do not get enough sleep due to insomnia or other sleep disorders.

What happens when your circadian rhythm is disrupted? Not only does your ability to get a restful night's sleep become compromised, your immune system is also compromised, making you more vulnerable to getting colds and flu's. Your body becomes more susceptible to weight gain, you are more vulnerable to develop mood swings, and your body's digestive system may be thrown out of whack. How does your circadian rhythm affect your ability to get a good night's sleep?

A disruption of your circadian rhythm may cause you to become sleepy and fatigued during work hours, and you are more likely to develop chronic insomnia. It is usually much more difficult to achieve restful sleep during the day. There are far more interruptions and environmental factors that negate the amount of sleep you can achieve during the day. Short-term disruptions to your circadian rhythm can also cause fuzzy thinking and an overall lack of clarity. This can result in an increase of workplace accidents caused by fatigue.

The long-term effects of an interrupted circadian system can leave you vulnerable to any number of illnesses and diseases, including diabetes, heart disease, and strokes. You may also be more vulnerable to psychological, mental, and emotional disturbances.

If you are a nighttime shift worker, what can you do to reduce the adverse effects that such work might have on your circadian rhythm? First, you must be proactive in maintaining good sleep hygiene. Good sleep hygiene means that you keep a regular sleep schedule, waking and retiring at roughly the same time each night. You should strive always to sleep in a dark, quiet room.

If you sleep during the day, you can make or purchase special blackout curtains that will allow you to pattern the effects of nighttime in your room. Turn off phones, timers, cell phones, and any other reminders that it is not really night time. You can use a white noise device or a fan to drown out any noise you may be exposed to while trying to fall asleep.

Once you have established an environment conducive to getting a good night's rest, you should strive to establish other healthy lifestyle habits that can help you achieve restful sleep. Getting regular exercise can help you maintain a steady circadian rhythm. Ideally, you should exercise at roughly the same time each day. You should also strive to eat small, frequent and healthful meals, and to stay well hydrated throughout your work shift.

If you are a nighttime worker, you should avoid overexposing yourself to natural light after your shift is done. The light will signal to your brain that it is time to 'wake up.' Wear sunglasses, or try to get home before absorbing excessive daylight. This will make it much easier for you to fall asleep once you get home. Also, after awaking from your daytime sleep, you may want to expose yourself to 30 minutes or so of artificial light. This will help signal to your brain that its time to wake up.

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