

Mental Disorders in Primary Care

Sleep Problems

Common symptoms

- Difficulty falling asleep
 - Frequent awakening
 - Early morning awakening
 - Restless or unrefreshing sleep
- ↳
- Difficulties at work social and family life
 - Makes it difficult to carry out routine or desired tasks
- ←

Common causes

Psychological causes:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Worries
- Stress

Physical causes:

Medical problems

- Overweight
- Heart failure
- Nose-throat & Lung disease
- Sleep apnea
- Narcolepsy
- Pains

Medications

- Steroids
- Decongestants
- Others

Lifestyle causes:

- Too hot or too cold
- Tea, coffee and alcohol
- Heavy meal before sleep
- Mental or physical activity before sleep
- Daytime naps
- Irregular sleep schedule

Environmental causes:

- Noise
- Pollution
- Lack of privacy
- Over crowding

What treatments can help?

Supportive therapy is the preferred treatment

Supportive therapy for:

- stress/life problems
- depression
- worry
- changes in lifestyle and sleep habits

Medication for:

- temporary sleep problems
- short term use in chronic problems to break sleep cycle

About medication

Short term

- use for short period of time

Side effects

- are important to report

Ongoing review

- of medication use is recommended

Long term

- when used in the long term there may be difficulties stopping and lead to dependence

Harmful

- harmful when alcohol and other drugs are used

Lifestyle change strategies

- Try to minimise noise in your sleep environment, if necessary consider ear plugs
- Try to make sure that the room that you are sleeping is not too hot or too cold
- Reduce the amount of alcohol, coffee and tea that you drink, especially in the evenings.
- Try to avoid eating immediately before going to sleep
- Try to have your dinner earlier in the evening rather than later
- Don't lie in bed trying to sleep. Get up and do something relaxing until you feel tired.
- Have regular times for going to bed at night and waking up in the morning
- Reduce mental and physical activity during the evenings
- Increase your level of physical activity during the day, build up a regular exercise routine
- Avoid day time naps during the day, even if you have not slept the night before
- Use relaxation techniques, for example, slow breathing

Slow breathing for relaxation

- Breathe in for 3 seconds
- Breathe out for 3 seconds
- Pause for 3 seconds before breathing in again
- Practice for 10 minutes at night (5 minutes is better than nothing)

More evaluation may be needed

- If someone stops breathing during sleep (sleep apnea)
- If there is daytime sleepiness without apparent explanation



Sleep problems

Sleep problems are treatable

Sleep problems

Sleep problems are treatable

Insomnia is the most common type of sleep problem. It is very distressing when others do not understand the difficulties that you are having with sleep and how it can affect your life. The good news is that **you can** overcome your sleep problems.

About sleep

The amount of sleep that people need varies considerably. Most adults sleep between 7 and 8 hours at night. However, it is usual for some people to have less sleep without being badly affected. Often people over 60 years old complain of having sleep problems, mainly because they have noticed that they are sleeping less. This change in sleep patterns is common and a natural part of aging.

It does not matter how much you sleep, what is more important is how well you feel physically and mentally as a result of your sleep pattern.

Effects of poor sleep

If you do have a sleep problem then it is very likely that you are experiencing mental and physical problems as a result. You might have difficulties with concentration and this can create problems while you are driving or at work.

Some of the effects of poor sleep include:

- falling asleep during the day
- feeling of tiredness
- poor concentration
- memory problems
- problems in making decisions
- irritability
- frustration
- increased risk of accidents and injury

About medication

It is important to note that medication alone will not cure your sleep problem. Long term use can lead to dependence, which means when you stop using the medication your problems can become much worse. If you are going to use medication, only short term or intermittent use is recommended. For example, someone who has suffered a loss may find it difficult to sleep and may benefit from the short term (a few days to 2-3 weeks) use of sleeping pills as needed.

Keep in mind that sleeping pills

- can be addictive
- can interact in a harmful way with alcohol and other drugs can cause problems in elderly people
- can be harmful to your baby if you are pregnant

Sleep disorders

It is important to determine whether you are suffering from a specific sleep disorder. Think about the following questions.

- Has anyone told you that your snoring is loud and disruptive?
if so you may be suffering from sleep apnea. This is a dangerous condition in which you stop breathing during sleep. There are effective treatments for this condition.
- Have you ever experienced sudden attacks of irresistible sleepiness during the day in which you could not stay awake?
if so you may be suffering from narcolepsy in which people feel forced to sleep for a period ranging from a few seconds to half an hour. This can be dangerous, particularly when driving or operating machinery. However, this condition responds to medication.
- Do you experience uncomfortable feelings in your legs or feet before falling asleep?
Does strong movement ease the discomfort? Has anyone told you that your muscles twitch or jerk? if the answer is yes to any of these questions you may have 'nocturnal myoclonus' in which there are numerous episodes of muscle twitching during the night. This condition can be treated with medication.

You should consult your physician if you have answered 'yes' to any of the above questions.

How to overcome sleep problems

Now that you have a better understanding of sleep disorders, we will describe to you some strategies to help you overcome your sleep problem. You will find that some strategies are more useful than others.

Remember to get a friend or a family member to help and support you.

Identify possible causes

There can be many causes of sleep problems. Sleep problems can be caused by a sleep disorder, physical illness, emotional factors or lifestyle factors such as too much coffee or tea and environmental factors like noisy streets, overcrowding or pollution.

We will try to help you identify whether your sleep problem is caused by a:

- sleep disorder, e.g., narcolepsy or sleep apnea
- other physical disorders, e.g., chronic infections or medication
- emotional disorders, e.g., anxiety, depression or stress
- lifestyle factors, e.g., drinking too many cups of coffee or smoking too many cigarettes
- environmental factors, e.g., noisy sleep environment or overcrowding

If you are not able to find the cause of your problem or even if you think you identify the cause, you should consult your physician. Once the problem is identified it will be possible to work out a solution to help you get back to a regular sleep routine.

Physical causes

Physical illness and medications are known to affect sleep. If you have a long term physical problem or you have been taking medication for some time, your sleep can be affected in an ongoing way. Have a look at the list below and mark any item that is relevant to you. If there are others, write them in the space below.

Possible physical causes

- Indigestion
- Headaches
- Backache
- Arthritis
- Heart disease
- Diabetes
- Asthma
- Sinusitis
- Ulcers
- Other physical illness

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If you have marked any of the above, you should consult your physician.

Emotional causes

It is more common to experience sleep problems when feeling depressed, anxious or angry. Think about your situation, read through the list below and mark those items that apply. If you have another emotional problem that is not listed write it in the space below.

Possible emotional causes

- Feeling stressed
- Worrying a lot
- Feeling tense or anxious
- Feeling sad or depressed
- Anger
- Other

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If you have marked any of the above we recommend that you discuss your feelings with your physician.

Lifestyle causes

Lifestyle causes of sleep problems are very common. Read the list and mark items that apply to you. If you are aware of other lifestyle causes write them in the space below.

Possible lifestyle causes

- Drinking coffee or tea
- Drinking alcohol late at night
- Eating just before sleep
- Late dinners, going to sleep on a full stomach
- Smoking a lot of cigarettes
- Strenuous physical activity before going to sleep
- Too much mental activity before sleep
- Wry little exercise during the day
- Working at night
- Daytime naps
- Not having regular times for going to sleep
- Not having regular times for waking up

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Environmental causes

- Noisy sleep environment
- Too much light in sleep environment
- Pollution
- Overcrowding

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Overcoming the sleep problem

Once you have identified a 'cause', you can start to plan ways to overcome your sleep problem.

If you have identified a physical cause or if you think that you suffer from a sleep disorder then you should discuss ways of managing the problem with your physician. Although you may not be able to cure a chronic illness, there might be better ways to manage the symptoms so it is less disruptive to your sleep.

If you have identified an emotional cause you should discuss this with your physician. You might also want to try the relaxation exercise.

If you have identified a lifestyle cause for your sleep problem then you should consider some of the following strategies.

Dealing with lifestyle causes

It is important to change environment triggers of your sleep problem. Here are some examples of what you can do.

- minimise the noise while you are trying to sleep;
keep the windows shut at night close the door to your bedroom, tell others to be quiet while you are sleeping, buy some ear plugs
- sleep in a dark environment;
buy curtains or blinds that will keep your room dark
- make sure you are comfortable while sleeping;
not too hot not too cold, comfortable bed. etc.
- reduce caffeine during the day;
not too much tea or coffee during the day, particularly in the evening
- reduce the amount of alcohol that you drink;
avoid alcohol a few hours before you go to bed
- reduce the number of cigarettes you smoke;
try not to smoke before you go to bed
- avoid eating or drinking before you sleep;
try to eat regular meals and finish eating 2-3 hours before you go to bed
- exercise regularly;
develop a regular exercise routine and do not exercise before going to bed
- allow some time to relax before going to sleep;
don't try to go to sleep after a lot of physical and mental activity
- avoid day time naps;
even if you have not slept well the night before, do not take daytime naps
- get up at a regular time in the morning;
- go to bed at a regular time at night;
- Avoid lying in bed worrying about not sleeping;
When you can not sleep, get up and do something relaxing; you can read listen to music or practise

Slow breathing for relaxation

Feeling physically or mentally tense can interfere with sleep. Learning ways to relax can help sleep problems. There are many relaxation techniques. Here we will give you a breathing relaxation technique from which you will benefit

- breathe in slowly to the count of 3 seconds.
- when you get to 3, slowly breathe out to the count of 3 seconds.
- pause for 3 seconds. before breathing in again
- after 5 min or so, say the word 'relax' to yourself as you breathe out
 - breathe in using your abdomen (not your chest) and through your nose
 - practice 5 to 10 minutes at night in a comfortable chair
 - keep in mind that the benefits of relaxation will not occur unless you practice
 - do not try hard to relax or to sleep; just carry out the exercise

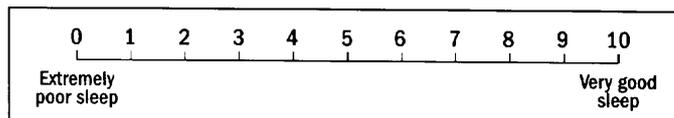
Record your sleep

Filling out the following form can help you keep track of your progress.

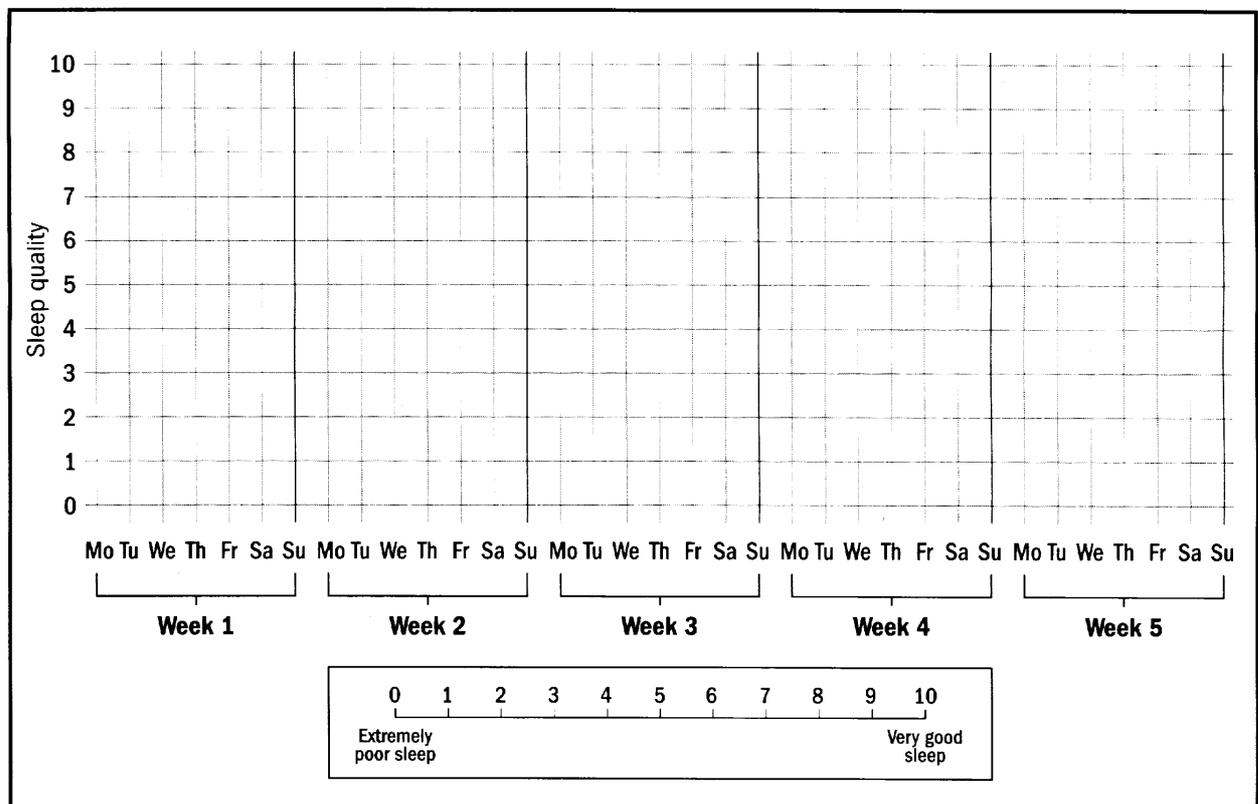
Each day write down the date, the time that you went to bed (Bedtime) and the time that you woke up (Wake Time). Then mark in the space provided how well you slept (Quality of sleep). Also, each week give yourself an overall rating of your sleep from the scale provided. Each week mark your overall sleep rating on the graph.

Sleep record form

	<i>Week 1</i>			<i>Week 2</i>			<i>Week 2</i>		
	<i>Bedtime</i>	<i>Wake time</i>	<i>Quality of sleep (0-10)</i>	<i>Bedtime</i>	<i>Wake time</i>	<i>Quality of sleep (0-10)</i>	<i>Bedtime</i>	<i>Wake time</i>	<i>Quality of sleep (0-10)</i>
Monday	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Tuesday	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Wednesday	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Thursday	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Friday	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Saturday	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Sunday	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____



Personal progress chart



This page will be filled by local centers or attending Primary Care Providers

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Medication information

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Self-help groups

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Counselors

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Doctors

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Help lines

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Suggested reading

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Other materials

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ICD-10 PC: Questionnaire for Sleep Problems

During the *last month* have you had any of the following complaints *most of the time*.

I. Have you had any problems with sleep? (Check or mark those that apply)

- Difficulty falling asleep
- Frequent or long periods of being awake
- Early morning awakening (hours earlier than usual)
- Restless or unrefreshing sleep

II. On average how many hours do you sleep? _____

At what time do you go to bed? _____

At what time do you get up? _____

If YES to any of the above, continue below

1. Do you have any medical problems or physical pains?
2. Are you taking any medication?
3. Do any of the following apply? (mark any that apply)
 - drink alcohol, coffee, tea or eat before you sleep?
 - take daytime naps?
 - experienced changes to your routine, e.g. shift work, jet lag?
 - disruptive noises during the night
4. Do you have these problems for more than three days a week?
5. Has anyone told you that your snoring is loud and disruptive?
6. Do you get sudden uncontrollable sleep attacks during the day?
7. Have you been feeling sad, down or depressed or have you lost interest or pleasure in activities you normally enjoy?
8. Have you been feeling worried, anxious or tense?
9. How much alcohol do you drink in a typical week?

I. During the *last month* have you been limited in one or more of the following areas most of the time:

- Self care: bathing, dressing, eating?
- Family relations: spouse, children, relatives?
- Going to work or school?
- Doing housework or household tasks?
- Social activities, seeing friends, hobbies?
- Remembering things?

II. Because of these problems doing the *last month*:

How many days were you unable to fully carry out your usual daily activities? _____

How many days did you spend in bed in order to rest? _____