Order Online
Sleep Care Guide
WHY IS HEALTHY SLEEP SO IMPORTANT?

Healthy sleep is one of the pillars of a healthy lifestyle as proper sleep, or lack thereof, affects daytime functioning and cognition, physical health, emotional wellness, safety and all aspects of your life.

It is recommended for adults to get at least 7 hours of sleep each night. For children, the following is recommended*:

- Infants: 12 to 16 hours
- Toddlers: 10 to 13 hours
- Children: 9 to 12 hours
- Teens: 8 to 10 hours

*American Academy of Sleep Medicine recommendations
HOW DOES SLEEP AFFECT YOU?

Daytime Functioning and Cognition
You must have sufficient sleep to perform your best. Consistently achieving suboptimal sleep can lead to:

- Decrease in attention
- Decrease in working memory
- Impaired reasoning skills
- Increased propensity for errors
- Slower reaction time

Physical Health
Studies have shown that poor sleep leads to a greater risk for many disease and health issues, including:

- High blood pressure
- Heart disease and hypotension
- Diabetes
- Stroke
- Alzheimer’s disease
- Certain cancers

Emotional Wellness
Chronic sleep loss can lead to long-term mental health disorders or issues, including:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Decreased social functioning
- Thoughts of suicide

Safety
Due to the decrease in attention and slower reaction times, having consistently poor sleep can lead to increased motor-vehicle and workplace accidents.
HOW DO I GET HEALTHY SLEEP?

If you are having difficulty sleeping at night, try following these general healthy sleep habits:

- Keep a consistent sleep schedule. Get up and go to bed at the same time every day, even on weekends or during vacations.
- Set a bedtime that is early enough for you to get at least 7 hours of sleep every night.
- Establish a relaxing bedtime routine.
- If you don’t fall asleep after 20 minutes, get out of bed, do a relaxing activity and then try again.
- Use your bed only for sleep and sex.
- Make your bedroom quiet and relaxing. Keep the room at a comfortable, cool temperature.
Limit exposure to bright light in the evenings.

- Turn off electronic devices at least 30 minutes before bedtime.
- Don’t eat a large meal before bedtime. If you are hungry at night, eat a light, healthy snack.
- Maintain a healthy diet in general.
- Avoid consuming caffeine in the late afternoon and evening. Avoid consuming alcohol before bedtime.
- Reduce your fluid intake before bedtime.
- Exercise regularly but not close to bedtime.

If you have tried to implement these habits and are still having trouble sleeping consistently, you should speak to your physician as you may have a sleep disorder.
WHAT ARE SLEEP DISORDERS?

Sleep disorders are medical conditions that affect sleep patterns and encompass a wide variety of sleep issues. There are dozens of sleep disorders; however, the most common are detailed below:

**Circadian Rhythm Sleep Disorder-Wake Disorder**
Your internal body clock is off from the usual sleep-wake schedule of society. You naturally sleep and wake significantly too early or too late; alternatively, other life activities (i.e. work, etc.) cause you to have an altered sleep schedule, which may result in Shift Work Disorder.

**Hypersomnia**
You sleep longer and for more hours than what is deemed normal; or you may sleep a normal amount of time but have difficulty waking and feel extremely tired throughout the day.

**Insomnia**
You are consistently unable to get an adequate amount of quality sleep. You can have acute insomnia that is short-term or chronic insomnia that generally lasts at least a month.

**Narcolepsy**
You have overwhelming daytime drowsiness and may experience sudden attacks of sleep. Some individuals with narcolepsy also experience cataplexy (sudden collapse).

**Parasomnias**
You exhibit abnormal behavioral or physiological activity (such as sleepwalking or night terrors) during sleep or in the transitional stage between sleep and wake.
Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS)

You have an uncontrollable urge to move your legs, usually due to leg discomfort which commonly occurs later in the day or during sleep.

Sleep-Related Breathing Disorders

You have difficulty breathing while sleeping; most commonly, your breathing stops repeatedly during sleep. This may be due to obstructions in the airway (obstructive sleep apnea) or the wrong amount of oxygen being pushed into your lungs by your brain and heart (central sleep apnea).
WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I HAVE A SLEEP DISORDER?

Document your symptoms and sleep issues
Keep track of any symptoms you have and their frequency. Ask bed partners or family members to detail any symptoms or issues they have witnessed. You can use our Symptom Tracker available on sleepallies.org.

Write out your questions and concerns
Write out a list of questions and concerns regarding your sleep behaviors and symptoms for discussion with your physician.

Make an appointment with your physician dedicated to your sleep issues
Doctor appointments can sometimes feel rushed as there is so much information related to your overall health that must be discussed. Make an appointment with your doctor specifically to discuss your concerns regarding your sleep.

Be candid with your doctor or sleep specialist
At your appointment be open and honest with your doctor about your symptoms and concerns. Being prepared with specific information and questions will help to make the most of your visit. If needed your physician may refer you to a sleep specialist.

Your doctor may decide that you need a sleep test to determine if you have a sleep disorder.
WHAT IS A SLEEP TEST AND WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT?

There are two types of sleep tests: an overnight polysomnography (PSG) and a home sleep apnea test (HSAT).

**Overnight PSG**

An overnight PSG is performed at a sleep center, where you will sleep overnight so that the center can monitor your sleep behaviors and breathing.

Generally, you will go to the sleep center in the evening where a technician/technologist will set you up with electrodes on different areas of your body that measure your vital signs and body position while you sleep. You’ll then sleep as you normally would any other night while the technologist monitors your sleep. After the test, you’ll be unhooked and can go home.

Although it can seem intimidating and feel strange that someone is “watching you sleep”, it is important to keep in mind that the purpose of the test is for your physician to be able to see your usual sleep patterns, so you should continue your normal routine as best you can. While the technologist is monitoring you to ensure the test is completed appropriately, they are not staring at you or judging you while you sleep.
HSAT

A HSAT is a condensed version of the overnight test that you take home with you and is only used to determine if you have sleep apnea (not other sleep disorders). You will be given equipment in a case (by either the sleep center or your physician’s office) and instructed on how to place electrodes for each of the equipment's sensors.

You will set yourself up with the equipment before going to bed and then sleep 1-2 nights with the equipment on, after which you return the equipment back to the office.

Whether you have an in-center test or an HSAT, following the test, the sleep physician will review your test and determine a diagnosis. You will be contacted by either your primary physician or the sleep physician to discuss your results.
I’VE BEEN DIAGNOSED. WHAT SHOULD I DO NOW?

Treatment
After diagnosis, you should work with your physician to discuss options and determine a treatment plan. Depending on your disorder, this could include changing your sleeping habits, behavioral therapy, PAP therapy or medication, along with other options.

Talk to your family
Explain your diagnosis to your family, including your symptoms, treatment and what changes may be required to everyday activities as a result.

Life changes
Depending on your disorder, you may need to make lifestyle changes, such as changing your sleeping schedule or pursuing weight loss. You may also need to address any school or work-related issues related to your sleep disorder, such as seeking disorder-related accommodations.

Find extra support
Learn more about your sleep disorder. There are abundant resources available to patients with sleep disorders. Find information and connect with other patients through the AAHS and other organizations.
The American Alliance for Healthy Sleep (AAHS) is a membership organization dedicated to partnering patients with sleep disorders, providers, and others interested in sleep to improve the lives of patients with sleep disorders and promote the importance of healthy sleep for all through advocacy, support and awareness.