

Trouble Sleeping

When should you get more help?

- If daytime sleepiness is your usual pattern.
- If you snore and also are sleepy during the day, or you also have high blood pressure or heart problems.
- If sleep problems interfere with your health, well-being, and quality of life.

Sleep disorder centers

Your doctor may be able to recommend a sleep disorder center to you.

Sleep centers can help you find out if you have some other important sleep problems. Sleep problems range from needing to learn to sleep better to serious issues such as sleep apnea.

There are sleep disorder services in many communities. You can check in the yellow pages under the “Physicians & Surgeons—M.D. (Medical) heading.

Following the alphabetical list is a listing of doctors under headings for the type of medicine they practice. Look under “Sleep Disorders” in this section.

Also check under the “Hospital” heading. You may also find sleep disorder services listed in the white pages under the names of hospitals.

Why you should worry about sleep problems?

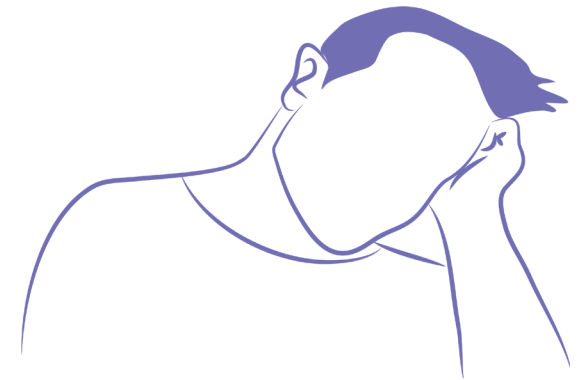
Besides the sleepiness and frustration that are part of sleep problems, there are several important reasons to be concerned about poor sleep.

Physical side effects of poor sleep can include an increase in heart and circulation problems, and an increased risk for a shortened life span.

Kidney failure can impact your ability to get a good night sleep. Trouble going to sleep, restless legs, waking in the middle of the night; all of these may feel like a nightmare.

You're not alone. About half of all dialysis patients have problems sleeping, compared to about 10 percent of other people.

There are steps you can take to get your self back on track with a good night sleep. Start by keeping a log or journal of your sleep habits so you can start to see patterns.



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Poor sleep habits

Ideally, people sleep well at night, and spend the day feeling rested and alert. In reality, your sleep patterns may be different. Often people who sleep during dialysis are awake at night.

You may wake up in the morning feeling drowsy and have coffee with caffeine to stay awake. Later you get drowsy, take a nap and then take more caffeine to wake up. By night, you are too sleepy to stay awake. You go to bed but feel too awake to go to sleep.

You sleep for a while; then you're in and out of bed. You wake up late and get up feeling groggy, just to start the cycle over again. You're sleepy, frustrated, miserable, and it's interfering with your life in many ways.

What you can do to help

Attacking poor sleep patterns requires a structured approach. It takes time, so you need to really stick with this program. Only doing it part of the time will not be helpful.

Keeping a sleep diary or journal of your sleep habits can often help you pinpoint the times you have trouble sleeping.

Keep track for a week or two of when you sleep and when you are awake. This may help you find a solution.

Start a structured sleep program

Try this sleep program to help.

1. Choose a wake up time based on your normal pattern (say 8 a.m.).
2. Get up the same time all week, even on days you don't have to.
3. Figure out how long you think you really sleep at night. (For you this might be as short as 5 hours or as long as 9 hours.)
4. Work back from your wake up time, and this will be your new bedtime.
5. During the day, stay active enough to stay awake. Take a walk during the day or do some activity you enjoy. On dialysis try reading or watching T.V. and not napping.
6. After 5 to 7 days of sleeping the entire time (waking with the alarm), start adding 10-15 minutes sleep time after every successful week.
7. If you do not sleep the entire time, back off to your previous sleep time for several more nights and then proceed.
8. Gradually you will sleep longer. As you can see, this takes time and willpower mainly at first. You may still feel sleepy during the day, but your nights feel much less frustrating.

Guidelines

- Don't stay in bed more than 10 to 15 minutes after waking, even in the middle of the night.
- Do not watch TV or work in bed.
- Reading helps some people feel sleepy, but not others.
- Do not work, eat a meal, or drink alcohol within 2 hours of bedtime.
- Avoid caffeine within 10-12 hours.
- Do not smoke.
- Avoid sedatives or sleeping pills, you want natural sleep.
- Set aside a daily "planning and worry time" so you don't need to worry while trying to fall asleep.
- Change your bedroom. Get a better pillow, get rid of the TV, pets and other distractions.
- Darken your windows with drapes or shades, and adjust the room temperature to be cool.