

Start the conversation:

# Your guide to discussing sleep with your doctor

Tips for having a conversation about your sleep with your doctor and helpful questions to ask during your next visit.



## How to talk about sleep concerns with your doctor

Low on energy during the day? Having difficulty staying asleep? Not feeling well-rested when you wake up? Feeling irritable? Having trouble concentrating? **These feelings may not be normal.**

Sleep, along with nutrition and exercise, plays an important role in your health and well-being.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, poor sleep quality frequently gets overlooked and is often blamed on life activities or seen as a normal part of aging.<sup>2</sup> Snoring, mood swings, headaches, consistent daytime tiredness and exhaustion are common symptoms of sleep apnea — a disorder that affects over one billion people worldwide of all shapes, sizes, genders and ages.<sup>3</sup>

Sleep apnea is a condition that can have negative effects on overall health. If left untreated, it can increase the risk of heart disease, stroke, metabolic disease, work-place errors and traffic accidents.<sup>4</sup>



**If you're concerned about your sleep or consistently feel tired, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor.**



## Feeling better starts with a conversation with your doctor

Your doctor can help determine if a sleep disorder is preventing you from getting the quality rest you need. The sooner you talk to your doctor about how you're feeling, the sooner you can receive a diagnosis, start treatment and get back to feeling like you again. **Use this guide to have a conversation about improving your sleep with your doctor.**

# Before the appointment

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## Track your sleep patterns

The more information you can share about your sleep, the easier it will be for you and your doctor to understand your sleep patterns and identify a potential problem. Before your appointment, do your best to record any sleep-related info, such as:

- What time do you go to sleep each night?
- What time do you wake up in the morning?
- How many times do you wake up during the night?
- How many naps do you take during the day and for how long?
- How well do you think you slept each night (on a scale from 1–10)?
- How much caffeine do you consume each day?



**If you have an app or wearable that tracks your sleep patterns, then you may already have a lot of this information handy to show your doctor during your visit.**



## Know the medications you're currently taking

One of the first questions your doctor might ask is if any of your current medications could be disrupting your sleep. That's why it's helpful to bring a list of any meds (prescription and over the counter), supplements or vitamins you might be taking, as well as the dosage and the times you generally take them during the day.

# During the appointment

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## Be open and honest

It's important to be honest with your doctor about how you're feeling. **Remember: It's their job to help you feel better,** so sharing details about your sleep and energy levels may be valuable even if you're not sure they're related.



## Describe all signs and symptoms

Symptoms of a sleep disorder can vary from person-to-person. For example, men with obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) typically experience snoring, while it's more common for women to have insomnia, fatigue, headaches and muscle pain.<sup>5,6,7</sup> That's why it's important to let your doctor know exactly what you're experiencing.

### Signs that your sleep may not be normal can include:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Consistent daytime tiredness            | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty focusing                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A lack of energy or fatigue             | <input type="checkbox"/> Frequently waking up during the night |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Irritability                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Insomnia                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Needing naps to get through the day     | <input type="checkbox"/> Headaches                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Snoring while sleeping                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Muscle pain                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waking up choking or gasping for breath | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____                           |



## Ask questions

Asking questions during your visit can help you and your doctor learn more about how your daily habits may be impacting your sleep, the quality of your rest and what the best treatment plan for you may be.

- Do the foods I eat — and when I eat them — affect my ability to sleep?
- Does the amount of time I spend exercising or the time of day that I exercise affect my sleep?
- How can you tell whether my symptoms are due to a sleep disorder or if they are symptoms of something else?
- Do I need a sleep test to know more about my sleep quality?
- Can I do a sleep study at home?
- Can I self-monitor my sleep instead of getting a formal sleep test?
- Could changing my existing medications or changing the way I take them make a difference in my sleeping patterns?
- Are there options besides medications, like yoga or meditation, that could help me sleep?
- If I start taking sleep medications, how do I avoid becoming dependent on them?

# After the appointment



## What happens next? Will I need a sleep test?

You and your doctor will decide together what to do next based on your symptoms and medical history. They may refer you to a sleep specialist to further assess why you're feeling tired and, in some cases, to schedule a sleep test.

A sleep test collects more information to help you learn about your sleep and determine if you have a sleep disorder. Feeling uneasy about going to a lab to get a sleep test? You're not alone. **The good news is that 60% to 70% of sleep studies for sleep apnea are done using home-based tests<sup>8,9</sup> that monitor your body while you sleep in the comfort of your own bed.**

Getting a sleep test can get you one step closer to treatment, and treating your sleep disorder can help improve your mental, physical and emotional health.



**Ask your doctor or sleep specialist about the available sleep test options, so you can choose one that's the best fit for you.**



## Bring this guide with you to your next doctor's visit

Print this guide and bring it to your next visit with your doctor so you can have a conversation about your sleep quality. Talking to your doctor is the first step to better understanding and improving your sleep health.

### Sources:

1 Lloyd-Jones DM, et al., (2022). Circulation. 2 Leger D, et al., (2024). BMJ Public Health. 3 Benjafield AV et al., (2019). Lancet Respir Med. 4 Knauert et al., (2015). World Journal of Otorhinolaryngology - Head and Neck Surgery. 5 Bouloukaki, I et al., (2021). Med Princ Pract. 6 Lin, CM et al., (2008). Sleep Med Rev. 7 Collop, NA et al., (2004). Clin Chest Med. 8 Corliss, J., (2020). Harvard Health. 9 Kapur VK, et al., (2017). J Clin Sleep Med.

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