

Common sleep conditions

Insomnia

Insomnia occurs when you have difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep. It is often caused by discomfort from illness or emotional stress such as feeling upset, sad, or stressed. Addressing the underlying cause can help in these cases. When there's no clear reason for insomnia, developing good sleep habits can be beneficial. If these measures aren't sufficient, more complex treatments like Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, which requires a skilled therapist, might be necessary. Sedative drugs generally provide only short-term relief.

Snoring

Snoring is a frequent issue affecting up to 40% of men and 20% of women regularly. It tends to worsen with age and weight gain. Snoring can disrupt a partner's sleep and lead to mutual distress. Many people who snore also have obstructive sleep apnoea.

Obstructive Sleep Apnoea (OSA)

OSA involves repeated interruptions in breathing during sleep due to a narrow, floppy throat. Most people with sleep apnoea also snore. Breathing difficulties lead to brief awakenings from sleep that disrupt sleep and cause daytime symptoms such as sleepiness and tiredness. This brief awaking is often not recalled. Poor sleep quality can also cause problems with focusing and concentrating during the day. Effective treatments include weight loss, reducing alcohol intake, using dental devices (such as a mandibular advancement splint), avoiding sleeping on your back and Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) therapy.

Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS)

RLS is characterized by uncomfortable sensations in the legs that compel movement. Symptoms are usually worst from evening to early morning and can severely disrupt sleep. RLS may be related to iron deficiency. Various medications can alleviate RLS symptoms.

Bruxism

Bruxism involves teeth grinding during sleep and is quite common. If untreated, it can lead to permanent tooth damage and jaw discomfort. Many people are unaware they have bruxism. Dental guards can help protect the teeth.

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Sleep Hypoventilation

Sleep hypoventilation occurs when the breathing muscles, controlled by the brain, are weak or overburdened due to severe lung disorders or obesity. This condition leads to insufficient breathing during sleep and can cause breathing and heart failure if untreated. Non-invasive positive pressure ventilation can help manage this condition.

Narcolepsy

Narcolepsy affects about 1 in 2000 people and involves unstable transitions between wakefulness and sleep. It can cause excessive daytime sleepiness, disrupted sleep, hallucinations, sleep paralysis, and cataplexy (sudden muscle weakness triggered by emotions). Not everyone with narcolepsy experiences all these symptoms. Drug therapies can be very effective. Sleep paralysis can occur independently of narcolepsy.

Sleep Talking, Sleepwalking, and Other Automatic Behaviours

Sleep talking, sleepwalking, and other automatic behaviors occur when people partially wake during sleep. These behaviors are more common in children and usually diminish with age but can persist into adulthood. Complex behaviors like binge eating and sexual activities can also occur and may be distressing. Effective treatments are available for these issues.

Nightmares and Night Terrors


Nightmares and night terrors, which arise from incomplete waking, are more common in children and can cause significant distress and anxiety about sleeping. Poor sleep habits can exacerbate these issues. Generally, counseling helps, but medications may be required occasionally.

Rapid Eye Movement (REM) Behaviour Disorder

REM sleep is characterized by dreams and muscle relaxation. In REM Behaviour Disorder, the muscles remain active, leading to physical actions during dreams that can be violent. This can pose a risk of injury to both the individual and their partner. Effective treatments are available for this disorder.

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