

SleepCaptions

Physical Illness & Sleep

Physical/Medical [Latin ars medicina = the art of healing] **Conditions:** Any health condition that adversely impacts sleep and/or wakefulness.

Poor health can interfere with sleep. Pain and discomfort, the alteration of certain body functions, or the use of medication might make us sleep too much, too little, or at the wrong times. Poor sleep can worsen medical conditions and in some instances precipitate them.

Certain physical conditions are more likely than others to interfere with sleep.

Features

Insomnia: the inability to sleep most often arises because of pain. Too much sleep during the day also disturbs nighttime sleep. Medications such as cold remedies or asthma medication might also interfere with sleep.

Hypersomnia: sleeping too much might result from the illness itself, or from pain medications.

Sleep-breathing difficulties: unless a person also has sleep apnea, difficulty breathing during sleep usually develops as the result of lung disease, heart disease, or neuro-muscular disease.

Parasomnia: problems that arise during sleep might be the result of a brain injury or disease, or the use of certain medications.

Circadian Disturbance: disruptions in the timing of sleep might be the result of the immobility associated with illness. Daytime fatigue and sleepiness shifts sleep to an earlier or later time. Pain killers and other medications might further shift the timing of sleep.

Sleep-Related Movements: movements during sleep may develop in response to brain diseases, kidney disease, or pregnancy.

Diagnosis

Sleep problems that are related to a medical condition would not exist if the underlying health problem resolved itself. Diagnosis might therefore involve some combination of your primary doctor, specialists, and a certified sleep specialist. Whether an overnight sleep study is necessary will depend on your condition. Keep a sleep diary of changes in your sleep since the onset of your illness.

Treatment

Be consistent with treating your underlying health problem. Keep your doctor advised of changes in your sleep as they arise. If you or a loved one are able, keep a sleep diary of your sleep habits, especially if they change frequently and your condition is chronic. Good sleep habits will compliment any treatment plan.



Does My Illness Interfere with Sleep?

My sleep problems began following the onset of my illness.

My sleep problems get better or worse according to changes in my illness.

Pain and discomfort keep me awake at night.

My sleep problems began after a change in medication to treat my illness.

My illness would be easier to manage if I could sleep better.

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Physical Illnesses Impacting Sleep

Most illnesses have the potential to disturb normal sleep in some manner. The following list, though not comprehensive, briefly describes the most common impact certain health conditions have on sleep:

Arthritis: Insomnia related to pain.

Asthma: Insomnia and sleep-disordered breathing related to nighttime symptoms.

Blindness: Free-running (non-entrained) circadian disturbance related to the lack of light.

Brain Infection, Injury or Tumors: Hypersomnia related to brain swelling or damage to the areas of the brain controlling sleep and wakefulness. Parasomnia related to tumors of the mid-brain. Sleep-related movements related to brain damage.

Cancer: Hypersomnia as a result of certain anti-cancer drugs. Insomnia related to breast cancer or the stress of having any form of cancer.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Hypersomnia related to altered sleep stages and symptoms of the condition.

Connective Tissue Diseases: Insomnia related to hypermobility or pain. Sleep-disordered breathing due to weakened airway muscles.

Degenerative Brain Diseases: Parasomnia and circadian disturbance associated with dementia with Lewy bodies. Circadian changes (sundowning) associated with Alzheimer's Disease. Sleep-related movements related to brain damage.

Epstein Barr Syndrome: Hypersomnia related to altered sleep stages and symptoms of the condition.

Food Allergy Insomnia related to nighttime symptoms such as gastrointestinal disturbance, itchiness, swelling, or headache. Sleep-disordered breathing related to swelling of the airway.

Heart Disease: Sleep-disordered breathing related to the inability to move oxygen into the lungs. Insomnia related to repeated arousals from sleep disordered breathing episodes.

Hyperthyroidism: Insomnia associated with the secretion of too much Thyroid Secreting Hormone (TSH).

Kidney Disease: Insomnia associated with high blood pressure and increased toxins in the body.

Menopause: Insomnia as a result of hot flashes.

Menstrual Cycle: Insomnia or hypersomnia due to hormonal changes at the onset of a menstrual period.

Neuromuscular Disease: Hypersomnia related to the disease process. Sleep-disordered breathing related to weakened airway muscles.

Parkinson's Disease: Insomnia and sleep-related movements associated with continued symptoms at night. Daytime hypersomnia and circadian disturbance related to the lack of consolidated sleep at night.

Pregnancy: Hypersomnia related to the increase of progesterone during the first and second trimester. Insomnia during the last trimester due to discomfort from the weight of the baby.

Restless Legs Syndrome: or sleep-related movements in the last trimester due to the weight of the baby.

Restrictive Lung Disease: Sleep-disordered breathing related to the inability to expand the lungs enough to take in adequate oxygen. Insomnia related to arousals from sleep-breathing problems.



Common Sleep Disorders During Illness

Obstructive Sleep Apnea

Insomnia

Hypersomnia

Nightmares

Restless Legs Syndrome

Insufficient Sleep Syndrome

Physical Illness and Sleep Mechanics

Pain is the primary reason for sleep problems during illness. For many patients, sleep is no longer a problem when pain is controlled. However, fatigue or exhaustion accompanies many diseases, even when pain is not present. Temporary problems such as infectious disease or recovery from surgery tends to entail bouts of extreme exhaustion that lessens as we heal. The tiredness and fatigue of chronic illness, whether mild or intense, never goes away. The ability to sleep soundly at night may be further compromised by immobility and isolation. The less active we are during the day, the less likely we will be to sleep at night. Adding to the challenge of sleeping well during illness, for some people, is depression and anxiety over the loss of previous abilities.



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Risks for Physical Illness Related Sleep Problems

- ✓ Diseases associated with significant pain
- ✓ Conditions strongly associated with altered sleep
- ✓ Misuse of medication
- ✓ Late Night Shift
- ✓ Failure to report sleep-related symptoms to doctors or health providers

Effects of Physical Illness Related Sleep Problems

- ✓ Worsening Symptoms
- ✓ Health-related complications

Need more information?

Visit the SleepMedicine Education web site at: sleepmedicineeducation.com for additional publications. See also:

SleepIssues: "Sleep and Health"
"Aging and Sleep"

SleepGuides: "Treating Sleep Disorders"

To schedule an appointment at any Sleep Medicine Centers location, visit www.sleepmedicinecenters.com or call:

(716)92-DREAM
(877)53-SNORE



Did You Know?

The American Journal of Hypertension reports that people who already hypertensive may increase the risk of a heart attack or stroke if they do not get enough sleep.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that 60% of people with arthritis experience enough nighttime pain to disturb sleep.

The Alzheimer's Society estimates the prevalence of Sundowning to be

as high as 66% among individuals with Alzheimer's Disease or other dementias.

The National Cancer Institute reports that cancer patients are likely to develop insomnia and circadian sleep disorders.