

Sleep problems

Common symptoms

- ⇒ Difficulty falling asleep
 - ⇒ Frequent awakening
 - ⇒ Early morning awakening
 - ⇒ Restless or unrefreshing sleep
- ⇒ Difficulties at work and in social and family life
⇒ Makes it difficult to carry out routine or desired tasks.

Common causes

- | Psychological: | Physical:
Medical
problems: | Lifestyle: | Environmental: |
|--|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">⇒ Depression⇒ Anxiety⇒ Worries⇒ Stress. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">⇒ Overweight⇒ Heart failure⇒ Nose, throat and lung disease⇒ Sleep apnoea⇒ Narcolepsy⇒ Pains. <p>Medication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">⇒ Steroids⇒ Decongestants⇒ Others. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">⇒ Too hot or too cold⇒ Tea, coffee and alcohol⇒ Heavy meal before sleep⇒ Daytime naps⇒ Irregular sleep schedule. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">⇒ Noise⇒ Pollution⇒ Lack of privacy⇒ Over-crowding. |

What treatments can help?

Supportive therapy is the preferred treatment

Supportive therapy for:

- ⇒ stress/life problems
- ⇒ depression
- ⇒ worry
- ⇒ changes in lifestyle and sleep habits.

Medication:

- ⇒ for temporary sleep problems
- ⇒ for short-term use in chronic problems to break sleep cycle.

About medication

Short term

- ➔ use for short period of time.

Long term

- ➔ when used in the long term, there may be difficulties stopping, leading to dependence.

Side-effects

- ➔ are important to report.

Harmful

- ➔ when alcohol and other drugs are used.

Ongoing review

- ➔ of medication use is recommended.

Lifestyle change strategies

- ➔ Try to minimize noise in your sleep environment; if necessary consider ear plugs.
- ➔ Try to make sure that the room in which you are sleeping is not too hot or cold.
- ➔ Reduce the amount of alcohol, coffee and tea that you drink, especially in the evenings.
- ➔ Try to avoid eating immediately before going to sleep.
- ➔ Try to have your dinner earlier in the evening, rather than later.
- ➔ Don't lie in bed trying sleep. Get up and do something relaxing until you feel tired.
- ➔ Have regular times for going to bed at night and waking up in the morning.
- ➔ Reduce mental and physical activity during the evenings.
- ➔ Increase your level of physical activity during the day; build up a regular exercise routine.
- ➔ Avoid daytime naps, even if you have not slept the night before.
- ➔ Use relaxation techniques, eg slow breathing.

Slow breathing for relaxation

- ➔ Breath in for three seconds
- ➔ Breath out for three seconds
- ➔ Pause for three seconds before breathing in again
- ➔ Practise for 10 minutes at night (five minutes is better than nothing).

More evaluation may be needed:

- ➔ if someone stops breathing during sleep (sleep apnoea)
- ➔ if there is a daytime sleepiness without possible explanation.