
Main Disorders That Cause Sleep Deprivation

As a plot of Television and movies, sleep deprivation is often thought of when discussing torture, brainwashing or hostage negotiation techniques. In reality, sleep deprivation is at an epidemic level in the United States. The purpose of sleep is to allow the body to heal and recharge itself from any damages done throughout the day. Sleep helps the body to repair tissue, bone and muscles, replenish the immune System, balance hormones and eliminate free radicals from the body. The brain creates neural pathways and connections, mainly while we are sleeping. Current estimates list 40 million people nationwide who suffer from long term sleep disorders. An additional 20 million experience occasional sleep problems.

Approximately 35 percent of adults get less than seven hours of sleep each night. While seven hours of sleep may sound like a good amount, experts say that most people require at least 8-9 hours of sleep nightly for the full effects, such as high energy, wakefulness and productivity, to be felt. Less than seven hours of sleep can cause sleep deprivation. This lack of sleep is causing many repercussions in our personal and business lives. From physical fatigue, illnesses, and lack of concentration to accidents, mental health issues, and long term side effects, lack of sleep can be responsible for many negative effects on your well-being. Chronically sleep deprived people can suffer from higher amounts of Depression and anxiety disorders, and more than 90 percent of people who are treated for depression report a chronic lack of sleep as one of their problems. (Sleep Solutions, 21) In this report I will explain the most common causes of sleep disorders and ways to help prevent or ease the physical symptoms of sleep deprivation so that you are able to get your sleep schedule, mental health, physical health and attitude back on the right track.

Insomnia

The most common sleep disorder is insomnia. Insomnia can occur by itself or can be caused by medical conditions, psychiatric conditions such as depression, as a side effect of medication you are taking, or stress. This is a sleep disorder in which people have trouble falling and/or staying asleep at night. Approximately fifty percent of adults experience occasional, or "transient," bouts of insomnia. Occasional insomnia can come and go, with periods of restful, deep sleep for weeks that are interfered with when stress is experienced. Stress is the biggest contributing factors on sleep disorders and causes periods of restless sleep issues, tossing and turning, etc.(Sleep Solutions, 12) Many of us experience this occasional insomnia as life gets in the way, work or school is stressful, there's a deadline to be met or a family occasion is causing stress or excitement or worry. Interestingly, both good and bad stress can cause sleep issues. Whether it is a death in the family or a new baby or family vacation, all of these can cause stress and will interrupt persons' sleep patterns occasionally.

For one in ten adults occasional insomnia can turn into 'chronic' insomnia. The symptoms of chronic insomnia may include difficult falling and staying asleep, waking up too often during the night, waking up too early in the morning, not feeling refreshed when you wake up, and daytime problems that include fatigue, mood problems, concentration issues, lack of productivity, lack of coordination and resulting accidents. Chronic insomnia is described as a constant issue, having these symptoms more than three nights a week for a month or longer. Often there is no obvious

reason and many describe chronic insomnia as not being able to turn your brain off. While occasional insomnia is best left to the individual to treat with herbal teas, relaxation techniques, essential oils, etc., chronic insomnia often needs a doctor's intervention.

Sleep Apnea

Sleep apnea is a common sleep disorder that occurs when your breathing is interrupted during your sleep from a few second to sometimes minutes. Sleep apnea happens when the upper airway collapses for a short amount of times during sleep and can happen repeatedly hundreds of times throughout the night. Sleep apnea affects over 22 million people in the United States and there are around 200,000 cases of sleep apnea diagnosed every year. Because you don't experience symptoms while awake, most cases of sleep apnea go undiagnosed. If sleep apnea is left untreated it can gradually become a more serious condition. (Sleep Solutions, 110) This causes your brain to wake you up, although many times you don't even realize it. Those who snore are more likely to suffer from sleep apnea as are those who are overweight. As with insomnia, there are two different types of sleep apnea, 'obstructive' and 'central.'

Obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), the more common of the two, is caused by a blockage of the airway when the soft tissue in the back of your throat collapses during your sleep. Symptoms of obstructive sleep apnea include snoring, daytime sleepiness, gasping for air during sleep, restlessness throughout the night, fatigue and trouble with concentration throughout the day.

Central sleep apnea is different in that your airway is not blocked. Instead your brain fails to send the signals to tell your body to breathe. The condition is named for the fact that your central nervous system is not functioning correctly and because of this you may experience gasping for air during your sleep as well as frequently awakenings throughout the night. This is your body's way of keeping your breathing going.

Sleep apnea is rarely fatal but it can increase your chances for high blood pressure, heart attack stroke, obesity and diabetes. It also makes a person more susceptible to substance abuse because people resort to using medications and alcohol to try to help them get a better night's sleep. Sleep apnea is diagnosed through a sleep study and treated most often with a C-pap machine, which is a machine that is attached to a mask that forces air into the airway. This machine must be used every night for the rest of the patient's life to be effective. (Sleep Solutions 110)

Restless Leg Syndrome

A less serious sleep disorder is Restless Leg Syndrome (RLS). Restless leg syndrome is actually very common, with reports of more than three million cases reported in the United States each year. RLS affects more women than men and children may experience RLS as well, although in children it is often thought to be growing pains. RLS is believed to be a disorder of the Central Nervous System related to the metabolism of neurotransmitters. (Sleep Solutions, 118) This sleep disorder causes an intense need to move your legs because of sensations such as tingling, muscle pulling or itchiness. This feeling can be triggered simply by lying down resting, sitting for a long period and during sleep. The muscles in the legs constantly move causing it to be difficult to relax and fall asleep. Restless leg syndrome is chronic; it can be a lifelong problem causing you to wake needing to get up and walk around to relieve the

strange feeling. It is believed that Iron therapy and vitamin B12 can help with the symptoms, while prescription Medication can be prescribed for relief as well. Many find that massage therapy helps. RLS has been found to be prevalent in those with fibromyalgia, Parkinson's disease and renal failure.

Sleep Paralysis

Sleep paralysis is a common condition that affects as many as four out of 10 people and often runs in families. There are more than three million US cases per year. It can affect anyone at any age but is more often noticed in early teen years. During a sleep paralysis episode, you may experience being unable to move or speak, even though you are fully aware. A person may hear, see, or feel things that aren't actually there and these hallucinations may cause fear and/or panic. These episodes are temporary and usually only last a minute or two. Sleep paralysis is usually self-diagnosable and self-treatable however you can be diagnosed by a Doctor without lab testing or imaging as there is no obvious telltale sign.

Nightmares/PTSD

Nightmares are more common in those suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD,) being one of the top complaints of soldiers returning from combat. PTSD causes many who have experienced or witnessed trauma to relive that trauma during nightmares. The Veterans administration (VA) is inundated with Veterans claims for disability due to PTSD and an average of 22 veterans a day commit suicide after fighting this debilitating condition of Nightmares, along with depression and constant hyper-vigilance when awake. The VA is struggling to keep up with the amount of veterans seeking psychological care and Anxiety, stress and insomnia can all cause severe nightmares in which a person wakes up feeling scared, distressed or anxious, unable to get back to sleep and is able to clearly, vividly remember the nightmare. "They recall the content clearly and do not go back to sleep quickly." (Sleep Solutions, 115) Many who suffer with chronic nightmares are later diagnosed with Sleep apnea and the nightmares are decreased once treatment for the sleep apnea is given. The only effective treatment for Nightmares seems to be Imagery Rehearsal Therapy, a therapy that "helps the patient work through the contents and feelings of a dream in a transformative way. The patient writes down the nightmarish dream, then changes the story to make it nonthreatening, and rehearses several times a day while awake." (Sleep Solutions, 117) As a final note on this subject, it should be noted that many prescription medication can actually cause nightmares as a side effect.

Narcolepsy

Narcolepsy is a "chronic sleep disorder in which patients experience daytime sleepiness so excessive that they fall asleep at inappropriate times for a few seconds up to 30 minutes." (Sleep Disorders and Their Causes, 41) People who are narcoleptic experience daytime sleepiness, and the sudden uncontrollable urge to fall asleep during random moments of the day. These so-called 'Sleep attacks' can happen during any activity, at any time of the day. Symptoms of narcolepsy include sudden muscle weakness with laughter and any other emotion, overall loss of muscle control, hallucinations, fatigue, and daytime sleepiness. Narcolepsy can develop at any age, however, it is more common for the disorder to appear between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five years of age. In many cases narcolepsy is left

untreated because it goes undiagnosed by a doctor. This can be a debilitating disease for the patient as narcolepsy interferes in literally everything they do. Many have problems holding a job, they are unable to drive due to the fear of falling asleep at the wheel, and they are unable to take part in activities that might be considered dangerous like skiing or hang-gliding. This results in many becoming home-bound and having significantly restricted lives.

Conclusion

While these are what many would consider the “Main” causes of sleep problems, there are many different disorders which are less common. Yet, for the person suffering from sleepless nights they are none the less important. Delayed Sleep Phase Syndrome, Periodic Limb Movements in Sleep, Advanced Sleep Phase Syndrome, Hypersomnia, Sleepwalking, REM Behavior Disorder, Rhythmic Movement Disorder, Night Terrors and Teeth Grinding are all considered sleep disorders and would take more space than I have in this report to cover. What many people may not fully understand is that all of these different types of sleep disorders that cause poor sleep can also cause long term health issues. It is very important for a person to be aware of their symptoms and how this is affecting your body and mind. Studies show that sleep deprivation can cause very harmful effects that can lower your quality of life and your life expectancy. Chronic medical conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, chemical dependency, and many other conditions can stay with you for the rest of your life. As for your mental health, poor sleep issues can also be associated with depression, anxiety and stress and can make the initial symptoms even worse, the result of which can increase other chronic medical conditions and keep your life expectancy at risk.

Sadly, most of these conditions can't be one hundred percent cured; however, there are ways to help manage and control them. You can manage your sleep disorders with home remedies such as Yoga, soft music at bedtime to help relax you, herbal teas, essential oils, such as lavender, and there are many homeopathic remedies available such as Chamomile, Hops, St Johns Wort, Passionflower, Lemon Balm and a HUGE amount of others. As last resort there are prescription medications, many of which work with the brain to turn off the mind long enough for you to get to sleep without causing a dependency.

Many Doctors suggest a strict daily regiment for those with sleep disorders. They suggest that you use good sleep hygiene, get up and go to bed at the same time every day. Don't change your sleep habits unless absolutely necessary. To ensure a comfortable sleep environment you must be free of all distractions. Turn off or mute your cell phone so that you aren't interrupted during sleep time. Remove any items that produce a blue light, as blue light has been found in studies to interrupt sleep. Before you go to bed make sure your room is clear of loud noises and light, use black out curtains if you need them. Set an alarm clock for the same time every day and night to remind yourself to stick to your schedule. Place the alarm clock across the room so that you are forced to get up to turn it off instead of rolling over and going back to sleep. It's best to do your daily exercise during the morning as it allows your body to wake up and start the day with lots of energy. If you want to do some form of exercise in the evening, try Yoga which is proven to relax your body and slow down brain activity.

During the day avoid the temptation to take a nap because it can ruin your sleep schedule. Try to avoid food at least two hours before bedtime as many foods can interfere with sleep. There are many reasons that foods can interfere with your sleep. Caffeine, energy drinks and sugary

drinks and snacks can all cause your heart rate to increase and can make you hyperactive. Water is the better choice before bed time because it hydrates you and adds no chemicals to your system. A heavy meal before bedtime can cause heartburn and other issues, so it's best to avoid them. Furthermore, your digestive tract slows at night so heavy meals are stored as fat instead of being burned for fuel. If you are truly hungry before bed time try eating a small, healthy snack that will hold you through the night. That way you will wake feeling refreshed.

If you are worried and think that you may have a sleep disorder, talk to your doctor about the symptoms you are having and how you are feeling. He or she will have answers for you and will order further testing if necessary, possibly prescribing medication for your needs. Until then, make sure you are getting at least eight to nine hours of sleep every night and always keep helping yourself by trying new things to help fall asleep faster and wake up feeling great!

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