

Why Am I So Tired?



Imagine a girl named Katy. It is nighttime, and she plops into bed exhausted. Her first day in the new neighborhood has been stressful for her. There was the work of unpacking. There were the curious stares from the neighbors. Would she make friends? Would this new place ever feel like home? Now she just needs to get some sleep. But tomorrow would be worse. It is the first day of school!

She turns out the light, punches the pillow into a comfortable shape-and stares at the wall. And stares. And stares. *Oh, no-not again* , she thinks to herself. She turns over on her back and looks at her clock. The lighted dial of her clock shows midnight. The next time she looks, it is 1 a.m., then 2 a.m. *Perfect. I'll certainly make an impression on the kids in the lunchroom tomorrow, especially if I fall asleep face down in my soup! I'll bet they haven't seen that before.* Katy has a sleep disorder called insomnia.

According to the United States National Institutes of Health, about 50 to 70 million Americans have sleep disorders that interrupt their sleep. Sleep disorders affect people in every age group.

Here's a look at some of the most common sleep disorders.

Insomnia: Eyes Wide Open

People with insomnia have trouble falling asleep and staying asleep. They are often grouchy the next morning and can't concentrate.

Poor sleep habits, such as irregular bedtimes and waking times, staying late at a party, watching TV, being

on the Internet endlessly, and using a computer right before bed can cause insomnia.

Stress is often the main cause of insomnia. You may have had mild insomnia the night before a big test. Like Katy, you probably have had some sleepless nights when something stressful was going on in your life, such as moving or trouble at home. This kind of insomnia usually goes away when the event that causes the stress is over.

Changing your habits or talking with someone about your problems may help to cure insomnia. In some cases, a doctor can recommend medication to help you get to sleep.

Restless Leg Syndrome

If you have Restless Leg Syndrome (RLS), your legs feel like they're tingling or aching when you lie down in bed. The only way to stop the unpleasant feeling is to get up and move around. That keeps you from falling asleep or wakes you up if you were already asleep.

RLS may be inherited, or it may occur because of nerve damage in the legs. Different kinds of therapies can help to control RLS. Certain medicines may also help relieve RLS.

Sleep Apnea

Sleep apnea is a breathing disorder in which you actually stop breathing at times during sleep. It usually happens when your windpipe is blocked and air can't get through. Your brain wakes you just enough to signal you to breathe. These pauses may happen from 20 times a night to several hundred times a night. You're sleepy during the day because you didn't get enough sleep, but you don't remember waking up.

One common cause of sleep apnea in adults is obesity. Losing weight often helps a lot. Other people with sleep apnea can avoid the problem by sleeping on their sides. Children with sleep apnea can often be helped by having their tonsils or adenoids removed.

Sleepwalking and Night Terrors

Most kids outgrow these two disorders by the age of 12. If you or someone in your family sleepwalks, move things that are easy to trip over. Make sure windows and doors to the outside are locked. It is also best to put gates up by staircases. You don't need to wake up a person who is sleepwalking; just lead him or her back to bed. However, if you need to wake up a sleepwalker, it is okay to do so.

Someone who has night terrors wakes up screaming. Then, usually about 10 to 20 minutes later, he or she goes back to sleep. Sometimes a few minutes of quiet talk may help to calm the person back to sleep. Someone who experiences night terrors often doesn't remember the incident in the morning.

Sleep Rhythms

This isn't a disorder, but it is important. People in different age groups have different sleep rhythms. Kids in

elementary school need nine to twelve hours of sleep each night. This means kids usually go to bed sometime between 7 p.m. and 9 p.m. For many preteens and teens, they may not be ready to go to bed until around 11 p.m. Researchers have found that a teenager's brain works on a different schedule. One school district in Minnesota changed the starting time of the high school from 7:20 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. The teachers found that the students were then ready to learn in their first period class. Many students' grades went up.

Sleep gives the brain time to repair nerve connections and to store information. When you're not getting enough sleep, you can lose your good judgment. Poor sleep also makes it harder to learn new things. Don't let a sleep disorder rob you of your ZZZ time.

How to Get Enough ZZZs

Here are some tips for getting to sleep and staying asleep.

- Avoid caffeine within four to six hours of bedtime. That means staying away from sodas and coffee.
- Exercise daily, but avoid strenuous exercise within six hours of bedtime.
- Keep your bed for sleeping. Don't do homework on it.
- If you can't fall asleep, leave your bedroom and go somewhere else to read. Go back to bed when you are relaxed and sleepy.
- Get up at about the same time on weekdays and on weekends.
- If you nap, do it before 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and don't sleep for more than an hour.
- Get into bright light quickly in the morning, but avoid it in the evening.
- Wind down before going to bed. Avoid heavy reading, studying, and computer games within an hour of going to bed.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What sleep disorder does Katy have?

- A. insomnia
- B. restless leg syndrome
- C. sleep apnea
- D. sleepwalking

2. Insomnia is an effect that can have more than one cause. What is one cause of insomnia?

- A. relaxation
- B. stress
- C. sleepwalking
- D. getting good grades

3. Read these sentences from the text.

For many preteens and teens, they may not be ready to go to bed until around 11 p.m. Researchers have found that a teenager's brain works on a different schedule. One school district in Minnesota changed the starting time of the high school from 7:20 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. The teachers found that the students were then ready to learn in their first period class. Many students' grades went up.

Based on this information, why might students' grades have gone up?

- A. The students were going to bed before 11 p.m.
- B. The students liked the teachers of their first period classes.
- C. The students were getting less sleep.
- D. The students were getting more sleep.

4. Read this sentence from the text.

Poor sleep habits, such as irregular bedtimes and waking times, staying late at a party, watching TV, being on the Internet endlessly, and using a computer right before bed can cause insomnia.

Based on this evidence, what might be a solution to insomnia?

- A. waking up at a different time every day of the week
- B. going to bed at a different time every day of the week
- C. watching a lot of TV
- D. avoiding using a computer right before bed

5. What is the main idea of this text?

- A. People with insomnia are often grouchy in the morning because they have not slept well.
- B. Children with sleep apnea may have their tonsils and adenoids removed to help them sleep.
- C. There are different kinds of sleep disorders and different ways to handle them.
- D. Sleep gives the brain time to repair nerve connections and store information.

6. Read these sentences about Katy from the text.

She turns out the light, punches the pillow into a comfortable shape-and stares at the wall. And stares. And stares.

Why might the author have repeated the phrase "and stares"?

- A. to argue that most kids get too much sleep
- B. to praise Katy for trying so hard to fall asleep
- C. to bring attention to how long Katy was staring
- D. to hint that Katy should have gotten out of bed to read

7. Read this sentence from the text.

You don't need to wake up a person who is sleepwalking; just lead him or her back to bed.

How could this sentence best be broken in two?

- A. You don't need to wake up a person who is sleepwalking. As a result, just lead him or her back to bed.
- B. You don't need to wake up a person who is sleepwalking. Third, just lead him or her back to bed.
- C. You don't need to wake up a person who is sleepwalking. Instead, just lead him or her back to bed.
- D. You don't need to wake up a person who is sleepwalking. For example, just lead him or her back to bed.

8. Describe what Katy does after turning out the light and punching her pillow. Include at least three details from the text in your answer.

9. At the end of the text, the author provides a list of tips for getting to sleep and staying asleep. What is one of the author's tips?

10. Which of the author's tips might have helped Katy the most? Support your answer with evidence from the text.