

Sleep Disorders

A sleep disorder can create havoc for children, adolescents and adults alike. Not sleeping well can make you late in the morning or not able to make it to school or work at all. You are not alert which can affect driving and performance in school or on the job. As those of us who have lost a night's sleep know you can't think as well. Symptoms of sleep disorder can also present as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. When you don't sleep well you are more likely to get sick, have respiratory symptoms, allergies and asthma. You can also suffer anxiety, depression and mood instability.

How much sleep do we need? School age children should get ten to eleven hours of sleep a night. Adolescents should get nine. It should be noted that a teenager will experience a shift in their circadian rhythm. Before puberty begins your child's body will urge him/her to fall asleep around eight or nine P.M. When puberty begins, that rhythm shifts to a couple hours later, usually ten or eleven P.M. Adults need seven to nine hours of sleep.

Symptoms of a sleep disorder occur in nearly one-fifth of elementary kids. That number goes up to one-third of children who receive special education. It occurs in one-third of high risk pre-schoolers.

What questions need to be asked to determine if a child might be suffering from a sleep disorder?

1. Does your child have difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep at night?
2. Does your child snore lightly or loudly in sleep?
3. Does your child gasp, choke or snort during sleep?
4. Does your child ever stop breathing during sleep?
5. Does your child ever kick their legs or twitch frequently during sleep?
6. Does your child roll around the bed often during sleep?
7. Does your child seem tired or fall asleep frequently during the daytime?
8. Does your child complain of aching, tingling or crawly feelings in their legs?
9. Is your child difficult to awaken in the morning?

If a sleep disorder is suspected, it is important to see a sleep specialist before a sleep disorder study is done.

What can be done to ensure a good night's sleep?

1. Have a regular bedtime
2. Don't have items in your bedroom that can keep you awake (televisions, clocks)
3. Do relaxing activities every night before you go to bed
4. As you go to sleep, think about all the good things you did all that day.
5. Exercise during the day, but finish at least three hours before bedtime
6. Don't watch TV or play video games right before bed. Too much noise and excitement make it hard for you to sleep.
7. Don't drink soda or eat chocolate before bed. Caffeine and sugar can disturb your sleep. Caffeine stays in your system for up to ten hours.

