

# A WAKE-UP CALL ABOUT SLEEP DISORDERS

Mayo Clinic in Scottsdale Presents Ten Tips for Better Sleep

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If you're one of more than 40 million Americans suffering from sleep problems, take heart. Sleep disorders are nothing new. Even the ancient Greeks made reference to problems sleeping.

Excessive sleepiness interferes with work, memory and, even worse, can occur while driving. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that drowsy drivers cause more than 100,000 motor vehicle accidents each year.

Snoring can be a clue that you have obstructive sleep apnea (OSA). Nervous or "restless legs" may indicate another type of sleep disorder. Sometimes, daytime sleepiness is caused by insufficient sleep or poor sleep patterns that lead to insomnia and can result in an ongoing pattern of poor sleep.

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## Ten Tips for Better Sleep

- **Stick to a schedule, and don't sleep late on weekends.** If you sleep late on weekends you'll get Sunday night insomnia. Go to bed and get up at about the same time every day.
- **Don't eat or drink a lot before bedtime.** Eat a light dinner no less than two hours before sleeping, and don't drink too much liquid to prevent nighttime trips to the bathroom.
- **Avoid caffeine and nicotine.** They are addictive stimulants and can keep you awake.
- **Exercise.** Physical activities enhance the deep, refreshing stage of sleep, but don't exercise late in the

evening or it could prevent falling asleep.

- **Cool your environment.** Lowering the temperature in the room mimics your internal temperature drop during sleep.
- **Sleep only at night.** Daytime naps steal hours from nighttime slumber so limit them to 20-minute power naps, preferably between 3 and 5 p.m. If you work nights, and need to sleep during the day, keep window coverings tightly closed to keep out sunlight.
- **Keep it quiet.** Turn off the radio and TV. Use earplugs or a source of constant background noise to mask sounds you cannot control.
- **Make your bed.** Have a comfortable bed. Go to bed when you're tired, and if you don't fall asleep in 15 minutes, get up and do something else. Don't

agonize about falling asleep; it will only keep you awake.

- **Soak and sack out.** Taking a hot shower or bath before bed can relax tense muscles and helps bring on sleep.
- **Don't rely on sleeping pills.** Check with your doctor before using sleeping pills. Make sure the pills won't interact with other medications or with an existing medical condition.

If these Ten Tips don't help, or if snoring or restless legs is a concern, speak with your doctor about scheduling a formal sleep study at Mayo Clinic or other certified sleep disorders center.

Robert R. Orford, M.D., C.M., is Director of the Mayo Clinic Executive Health Program in Scottsdale, Ariz. For more information about this topic go to [www.mayoclinic.com](http://www.mayoclinic.com). Mayo Clinic Executive Health Programs are located in Scottsdale; Rochester, Minn.; and Jacksonville, Fla. To schedule an appointment, call 480-301-8088.