

How's your *sleep?*



Sleep is one of the most important things you can do for your body and mind. But most of us don't get enough.

"Hey, how did you sleep last night?" is usually a casual inquiry, nothing more. But when your health care provider brings it up, this question can serve as a gateway to a conversation about your overall wellbeing.

The domino effect

Not getting enough sleep doesn't just result in groggy mornings and increased caffeine intake — it can trigger a cascade of health problems.



Among them:

ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION

Sleep problems have a strong link with mental health conditions. Not sleeping enough can bring on mental health struggles or aggravate existing symptoms. Sometimes, these conditions might be the reason for your sleep woes.

COGNITIVE SIDE EFFECTS

Sleep deprivation impairs both your short-term recall and working memory. Research suggests that a consistent lack of sleep in middle age can increase the risk of developing dementia later in life.

UNHEALTHY WEIGHT GAIN

A lack of sleep can interfere with your body's hunger hormones, often leading to weight gain. Those extra pounds can then set the stage for more health complications, such as high blood pressure and type 2 diabetes.



Speak up about sleep

Be honest with your provider about your sleep frustrations. The conversation will help your health care provider identify any underlying physical or mental health issues that might be impacting your sleep.

After discussing these concerns, you can work on integrating actionable steps into your routine. The tips below are a good starting point for improving sleep, but your provider will know how to offer a more personalized approach.

Go to sleep and wake up at the same time each day – even on weekends.

Create relaxing pre-sleep rituals, such as reading a book or listening to calming music.

Keep your sleep environment cool, dark, and quiet.

Avoid large meals, caffeine, and alcohol at night.

A solid night's sleep is about more than waking up on the right side of the bed. It's a cornerstone for your physical and mental health.



Your heart needs sleep, too.



Adults who sleep fewer than seven hours each night may raise the risk for additional issues, including:

HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

During normal sleep, your blood pressure goes down. Having sleep problems means your blood pressure stays higher for a longer period. High blood pressure is one of the leading risks for heart disease and stroke. Nearly half (48.1%) of adults in the United States have high blood pressure.

TYPE 2 DIABETES

Diabetes is a disease that causes sugar to build up in your blood, a condition that can damage your blood vessels. Some studies show that getting enough good sleep may help people improve blood sugar control.

OBESITY

Lack of sleep can lead to unhealthy weight gain. This is especially true for children and adolescents, who need more sleep than adults. Not getting enough sleep may affect a part of the brain that controls hunger.

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. www.CDC.gov