

NEWSLETTER

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 The Regional Center for Sleep Medicine
a diagnostic and treatment center for sleep/wake disorders

Tips For Improving Your Sleep Year-Round



There is still much to be learned about the biology behind sleep and what our bodies and brains do while we rest. But you do not need to go into every season completely unprepared. Start by taking a look at the outside factors which may be influencing your sleep in addition to your bedroom habits. If you are in a colder climate, for example, a humidifier set on "low" will add some much needed moisture to the air which will keep your sinuses healthy and make you less susceptible to germs. There are a number of other controllable factors which could influence your sleep:

- Keep your bedroom dark and cool
- Make sure your bedroom remains a place of relaxation (this may mean removing smartphones, tablets, televisions and other electronics from your room)
- Stick to a regular sleep-wake schedule to maintain your body's natural circadian rhythm
- Be prepared for you – or your partner – to snore



Take a look inside...

How Weather Changes Ruin Our Sleep (And How To Fight It)



The Fall Sleep Health Newsletter!

One area which is often adversely affected by these seasonal changes is our sleep. There are a lot of aspects of having a good night's rest which are under our control. But changes in temperature, atmospheric pressure, precipitation, and humidity can have both a positive and negative impact on our rest.

How Weather Affects Our Sleep In Fall & Winter

There are some benefits to the drop in temperature in late fall and winter. One Washington Post survey found

that 80% of respondents preferred sleeping in cooler weather. The drier air can also help people fall asleep as it helps keep airways free and clear. But the shorter days that this time of year brings us in the Northern Hemisphere also means less sunlight, which in turn means less vitamin D. Research has revealed that the lack of sunlight in the winter may influence our serotonin levels, which may be the reason why many individuals feel more depressed and fatigued in the winter. Light to dark cycle changes can also have an effect on when our bodies release melatonin.



This is a fact!

Man is the only mammal that willingly delays sleep.

Random Facts

Random Facts About Sleep

- The higher the altitude, the greater the sleep disruption. Generally, sleep disturbance becomes greater at altitudes of 13,200 feet or more. The disturbance is thought to be caused by diminished oxygen levels and accompanying changes in respiration. Most people adjust to new altitudes in approximately two to three weeks

- In general, most healthy adults need seven to nine hours of sleep a night. However, some individuals are able to function without sleepiness or drowsiness after as little as six hours of sleep. Others can't perform at their peak unless they've slept ten hours.

- And did you know seasonal affective disorder is believed to be influenced by the changing patterns of light and darkness that occur with the approach of winter?

Seasonal Sleep & You

This means that you may feel tired earlier or later than you typically would. So how can you combat those winter blues? According to research from Purdue University, exposing yourself to sunlight can significantly help, though how much sun you need depends on how much pigmentation is in your skin:

- Fair skinned individuals need 9 minutes in the sun each day

- Medium skinned individuals need 16 minutes in the sun each day

- Dark skinned individuals need 38 minutes in the sun each day

With 25% of your skin exposed, this will allow you to absorb 2000IU of vitamin D. If you can't get outside during the day, one study published in the Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine found that sitting by a window can help. Otherwise you may want to consider other alternatives such as vitamin D supplements, UV lights, or in extreme cases (such as if you experience Seasonal Affective Disorder or "SAD") you may want to look into white light therapy.

Tackling Seasonal Sleep Issues

Every seasonal change brings about its own set of issues. One old wives' tale about being able to feel weather changes "in your bones" may not be too far from the truth. Two studies – one from Tufts University and another Dutch study – found that colder weather and an increase in barometric pressure were correlated with an increase in arthritis pain. Another study found that a decrease in barometric pressure, hotter temperatures, and humidity could increase the occurrence of migraines in sensitive individuals. Each of the seasons also bring certain allergies and illnesses:

Spring and Summer: Tree and grass pollen

Fall: Ragweed

Winter: Increased exposure to dust mites

In winter there is also a notable spike in the number of colds and flu cases (which many researchers believe is due to reduced exposure to the sun). Allergies, colds, and the flu can make sleep uncomfortable and can result in coughing and snoring, making us more restless in our sleep.

Even the medications which we use to treat our symptoms have been shown to impair overall sleep quality, especially antihistamines. Stormy weather which can rage at any time of the year can also have a negative effect on our sleep. Apart from the anxiety which comes when bad weather strikes, it has been found that obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) may also be affected by stormy weather to some extent. The Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine found that the severity of OSA symptoms were correlated with atmospheric pressure. The lower the atmospheric pressure – associated with weather systems – the increase in OSA symptoms. There have also been links made between storms and asthma. Researchers believe that this may be due to an increase in pollen in the air, which may trigger asthmatic symptoms.

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What Causes Sleep Apnea?

“Symptoms of Sleep Apnea

When you're awake, throat muscles help keep your airway stiff and open so air can flow into your lungs. When you sleep, these muscles relax, which narrows your throat.

Normally, this narrowing doesn't prevent air from flowing into and out of your lungs. But if you have sleep apnea, your airway can become partially or fully blocked because:

- Your throat muscles and tongue relax more than normal.
- Your tongue and tonsils (tissue masses in the back of your mouth) are large compared with the opening into your windpipe.
- You're overweight. The extra soft fat tissue can thicken the wall of the windpipe. This narrows the inside of the windpipe, which makes it harder to keep open.
- The shape of your head and neck (bony structure) may cause a smaller airway size in the mouth and throat area.

The aging process limits your brain signals'

ability to keep your throat muscles stiff during sleep. Thus, your airway is more likely to narrow or collapse.

Not enough air flows into your lungs if your airway is partially or fully blocked during sleep. As a result, loud snoring and a drop in your blood oxygen level can occur.

If the oxygen drops to a dangerous level, it triggers your brain to disturb your sleep. This helps tighten the upper airway muscles and open your windpipe. Normal breathing then starts again, often with a loud snort or choking sound.

Frequent drops in your blood oxygen level and reduced sleep quality can trigger the release of stress hormones. These hormones raise your heart rate and increase your risk for high blood pressure, heart attack, stroke, and arrhythmias (irregular heartbeats). The hormones also can raise your risk for, or worsen, heart failure.

Drinking Soda & Your Sleep

The Caffeine Can Keep You Up

Starting with the most obvious culprit, caffeine is a well-known stimulant that blocks chemicals in the brain that make you feel sleepy, temporarily helping you to feel more alert. It's safe in moderation, but can stay in your bloodstream for about six hours. If you have a soda with dinner, you may well still feel the effects at bedtime.

It may worsen nighttime heartburn symptoms

The carbonation in soft drinks can lead to bloating and stomach pressure that contributes to heartburn, or GERD. And GERD has a tendency to flare up at night and make you more likely to suffer from sleep problems like insomnia, daytime sleepiness, and restless legs syndrome.

It's a contributor to obesity.

Sugar-sweetened drinks like soda are the number one source of sugar in the American diet, making up nearly half of the added sugars that Americans consume. A

20-ounce bottle of regular cola packs about 240 calories from sugar. Yet, paradoxically, even without containing any calories, diet soda can contribute to weight gain, too. That's bad news for sleep quality, since obesity raises the risk of sleep apnea and more sleep loss, creating a vicious cycle.

But here's the good news: Cutting out this pesky beverage and replacing it with, say, water or seltzer can leave you feeling hydrated and refreshed—without hurting your sleep.





Sleep TidBit

Studies suggest that a clean room could lead to a better night's sleep



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The Regional Center for Sleep Medicine is a member of Sleep Network, a national consortium of diagnostic and treatment sleep disorder centers. Through its affiliation with Sleep Network, our center offers patients state of the art technology and the most comprehensive evaluation in sleep medicine.

Accredited by the Academy of Sleep Medicine, The Regional Center for Sleep Medicine features a multidisciplinary team of physicians with expertise in sleep medicine. All of our sleep technologists are certified by the Board of Registered Polysomnographic Technologists (BRPT) or are board eligible. They observe sleep behavior and collect the data that will be analyzed to help diagnose your condition.

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The Holidays and Your Sleep. Are you ready?