



Women & Sleep Disorders

In recent years, it has become more common for women to be affected by sleep disorders than men. Why? Because many of the life changes women experience can have a negative effect on sleep habits. Changes such as pregnancy, menopause, aging, health issues and balancing roles within the family and work environment all can eventually take their toll. The Diagnostic Sleep Center staff of LaPorte Regional Health System understands these changes. They can help identify the causes of sleep disorders and provide an appropriate treatment plan so you can enjoy a balanced, more fulfilling and healthier lifestyle.

How Women's Roles Affect Women

A woman can assume many roles during her lifetime — roles often accompanied by physical and emotional changes unique to women. Entering adolescence, going away to college, starting a new job, living on your own for the first time, getting married, having children and hormone changes all affect women differently than men. Trying to balance many different roles at the same time can affect a woman's quality of sleep.

Sleep is not merely a “time out” from our busy lives. It is essential for quality of life, including better safety, health, mental and emotional functioning. How much sleep is enough? It varies on individual needs. According to the National Sleep Foundation, most healthy adults need an average of eight hours of sleep per night. And, contrary to the popular myth, the need for sleep does not decline with age.

Good Habits, Better Sleep

The following list identifies some tips that can help women develop healthier sleep patterns.

Menstruation

- ▶ Eat a well-balanced diet low in fat, salt and sugar.
- ▶ Take vitamin and mineral supplements.
- ▶ Exercise regularly during the daytime.

Pregnancy

- ▶ Take a warm shower before bed.
- ▶ For relaxation, ask someone to massage your shoulders, neck or back.
- ▶ Sleep with pillows under your stomach and back, and between your knees.
- ▶ If your legs feel uncomfortable or tingly, try to walk, stretch or rub your legs, or ask your healthcare provider how to ease your symptoms.
- ▶ To reduce heartburn, sleep with your upper body raised six inches. Don't lie down for at least two hours after you eat.
- ▶ To reduce back pain, exercise and practice good posture. Sleep on a firm mattress.
- ▶ Take naps when you are tired during the day.
- ▶ Avoid or limit caffeinated beverages (coffee, black tea and cola)

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Motherhood

- ▶ Ask for help or accept help when needed.
- ▶ If you are feeling depressed, share your feelings with your loved ones. Talk to your healthcare provider if your feelings prevent you from eating or sleeping normally.
- ▶ Try to adjust your baby's sleep to fit a day and night cycle. Dim the lights at night in a quiet setting, and keep your baby active longer during the day.
- ▶ Take a daily walk with your baby—fresh air and daylight will help both of you sleep better.
- ▶ When your baby sleeps, take a nap or put your feet up and rest.

Job-Related Stress

- ▶ Try to identify the underlying cause of your stress. For example, if you are uncomfortable with your new co-worker, ask yourself why he or she makes you uncomfortable. Or, if you have a huge project with a tight deadline, ask your boss for an assistant, or delegate different parts of the project to other co-workers.
- ▶ Leave all office problems at the office. Give yourself a break from them once you get home. Relax by working out, taking a long walk, treating yourself to a bath, curling up with a good book, or attending a movie, concert, sports event or theatrical production.
- ▶ Avoid or limit caffeinated beverages (coffee, black tea and cola).
- ▶ Enroll in a time management or stress management course.

Menopause

- ▶ If you experience hot flashes and night sweats, avoid caffeine and spicy foods for dinner. Keep a window open or use a portable fan. Use cotton sheets on your bed and wear cotton nightclothes.
- ▶ Mood swings can cause insomnia, memory loss, fatigue or depression. Share your feelings with other women your age, and discuss your symptoms with your healthcare provider.

For more information, contact the Diagnostic Sleep Center of La Porte Regional Health System at (219) 326-2377 or visit www.laportehhealth.org.



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