

# SLEEP

## *What is sleep?*

Sleep is the process your body uses to recover from the wear and tear of daily living. Sleep is a necessary part of life. It is essential for mental and physical health, quality of life, and safety. You could pursue a healthy lifestyle by eating a healthy diet, exercising regularly, and finding strategies to reduce stress. But, without good quality sleep, your health is at risk.



While most people know the value of sleep, many don't make sleep a priority or the sleep they get isn't good quality sleep. The key to good health is knowing how sleep affects you, how much sleep you need, and ways to get better sleep.

## *Why is sleep important for people with epilepsy, their families, and caregivers?*

Sleep and epilepsy are closely connected.

- ▶ Sleep can affect the timing, number, and severity of seizures.
- ▶ Not enough or poor quality of sleep is a common seizure trigger for many people.
- ▶ Some epilepsy syndromes are highly related to sleep and may be called sleep-related epilepsies. For example, some seizures may happen only at night—shortly after falling asleep, during certain sleep stages, or upon waking up.



- ▶ Seizures at night interrupt the quality of sleep often leaving people feeling sleep deprived.
- ▶ Epilepsy can worsen your ability to sleep and can also make sleep disorders worse.
- ▶ Not sleeping well at night can make you feel poorly during the day.
- ▶ Some seizure medicines also affect sleep. Some may make people sleepier. Others may lead to problems falling or staying asleep.

People with problems sleeping should talk to their epilepsy providers as well as their primary care providers to sort out possible causes of sleep difficulties.

## *Caregivers and Sleep*

If you are a caregiver for someone living with epilepsy, it is very important you make healthy sleep a priority for yourself. Parents of children with epilepsy generally do not get enough sleep. For example:

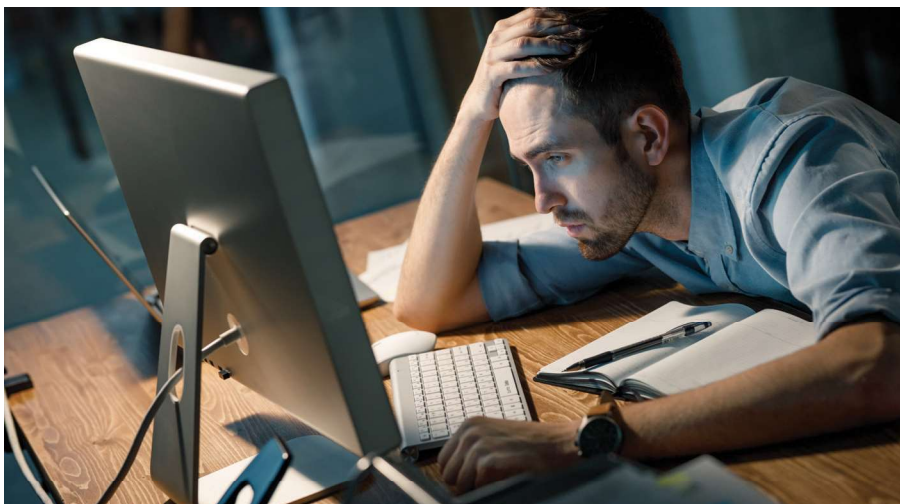
- ▶ You may worry about your child or family member at night.
- ▶ You may be woken up by seizures and not get enough sleep.
- ▶ You may sleep in your child's room to be there in case they have a seizure.

If your child or loved one has epilepsy, look at your own sleep habits. Are you getting enough sleep? Is it broken up? Are you tired during the day? If you or your partner are having trouble sleeping, talk to a health care provider about ways to address the problem.

## *Effects of Poor Sleep*

Practicing good sleep habits is important for both physical and mental health. A good night's sleep can make you more productive and affect how you feel during the day.

- ▶ Daytime sleepiness can cause many problems, including car accidents, anxiety, attention problems, short tempers, home and workplace injuries, or overeating.
- ▶ Long-term sleep deprivation can lead to high blood pressure, heart attacks, stroke, obesity, depression, and other mood disorders.



Some of these problems may be related to medication side effects, other health problems, and life challenges related to epilepsy and seizures. Always check with your health care provider if any of these problems happen.

## *How much is enough sleep?*

Sleep needs are different for each person and can change as you age. The key is to get the right amount of sleep on a consistent basis. More sleep is not always a good thing. According to the National Sleep Foundation, the sleep recommendations for each age group are as follows:

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AGE	RECOMMENDED	MAY BE APPROPRIATE	
Newborns: 0-3 months	14 to 17 hours	11 to 13 hours	18-19 hours
Infants: 4-11 months	12 to 15 hours	10 to 11 hours	16 to 18 hours
Toddlers: 1-2 years	11 to 14 hours	9 to 10 hours	15 to 16 hours
Preschoolers: 3-5 years	10 to 13 hours	8 to 9 hours	14 hours
School-aged Children: 6-13 years	9 to 11 hours	7 to 8 hours	12 hours
Teenagers: 14-17 years	8 to 10 hours	7 hours	11 hours
Young Adults: 18-25 years	7 to 9 hours	6 hours	10 to 11 hours
Adults: 26-64 years	7 to 9 hours	6 hours	10 hours
Older Adults: ≥65 years	7 to 8 hours	5 to 6 hours	9 hours

## *How do I get a good night's sleep?*

No matter how much sleep you need, there are several steps you can take to improve your sleep habits. Here are some tips to get a good night's sleep.

- ▶ Set a realistic time for bed and stick to that schedule.
- ▶ Follow a relaxing routine at the end of the day to shut down and de-stress.
- ▶ Turn off electronics an hour before bed and remove all electronics/blue light from your bedroom.
- ▶ Get some sun during the day to jumpstart the production of melatonin, a hormone that regulates your sleep and wake cycles.
- ▶ Keep the bedroom dark, quiet, and cool for the best sleep (between 60–67 degrees Fahrenheit).
- ▶ Use fans or humidifiers to create white noise and soothe you.
- ▶ Create a sleep-friendly bedroom with a comfortable mattress and pillow.
- ▶ Get plenty of exercise during the day.
- ▶ Avoid large meals right before bedtime.
- ▶ Avoid stimulants and alcohol in the evening.
- ▶ If you must use sleep aids, talk to your health care provider.

## *What if these tips don't help?*

If you have a sleep problem that does not get better by improving your sleep habits, talk to your health care provider.

- ▶ He or she may suggest an evaluation to test for a sleep disorder and may prescribe medication or devices to improve sleep.
- ▶ Tests may be needed to see if you are having seizures at night.
- ▶ Seizure medicines may need to be adjusted. Don't make changes on your own. Suddenly stopping or changing your seizure medicine can cause more problems.
- ▶ Changes in mood, such as depression and anxiety, can also cause sleep problems.
- ▶ Talking to a mental health provider may help sort this out. Sometimes counseling or behavior changes help mood and sleep.
- ▶ If problems persist, medication for mood may be needed.

Whatever the cause, keep working on good sleep habits and staying healthy.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- ▶ Wellness and Sleep: [epilepsy.com/sleep-and-wellness](https://epilepsy.com/sleep-and-wellness)
- ▶ Sleep and Epilepsy: [epilepsy.com/challenges-sleep](https://epilepsy.com/challenges-sleep)