

Sleep Disorders

Pre-reading

Questions: What are sleep disorders? Who has them? What do you know about them?

Definitions: Chronic – lasting a long time

Insomnia – the condition of being unable to fall asleep

Reading



16 At least 40 million Americans suffer from chronic sleep disorders each year. Two of the most
common are insomnia and sleep apnea.

22 Many people experience short-term insomnia. This problem can result from stress, jet lag, diet, or
37 many other factors. Insomnia almost always affects job or school performance. Insomnia tends to increase
52 with age. It affects about 40 percent of women and 30 percent of men.

66 For short-term insomnia, doctors may prescribe sleeping pills. **Mild** insomnia can often be
79 prevented or cured by practicing good sleep habits. One “good sleep” tip is going to bed at the same time
99 each night and getting up at the same time each morning. Another is relaxing with a warm bath or good
119 book before bed.

122 An estimated 18 million Americans have sleep apnea. However, few of them have had the problem
138 diagnosed. Sleep apnea is a disorder of interrupted breathing during sleep. It usually occurs in association
154 with fat buildup or loss of muscle tone with aging.

164 These changes allow the windpipe to collapse during breathing when muscles relax during sleep.
178 This problem is called obstructive sleep apnea. It is usually associated with loud snoring, though not
194 everyone who snores has this disorder. Sleep apnea can also occur if the neurons that control breathing
211 malfunction during sleep.

214 During an episode of obstructive apnea, the person’s effort to inhale air creates suction that
229 collapses the windpipe. This blocks the air flow for 10 seconds to a minute while the sleeping person
247 struggles to breathe.

250 When the person’s blood oxygen level falls, the brain responds by awakening the person enough to
266 tighten the upper airway muscles and open the windpipe. The person may snort or gasp, and then resume
284 snoring. This cycle may be repeated hundreds of times a night.

295 The frequent awakenings that sleep apnea patients experience leave them continually sleepy. Sleep
308 apnea also deprives the person of oxygen, which can lead to morning headaches or a decline in mental
326 functioning. It is also linked to high blood pressure and an increased risk of heart attacks and stroke.

344 Many treatments are available for sleep apnea. Mild sleep apnea can often be overcome through
359 weight loss or by preventing the person from sleeping on his or her back. Other people may need special
378 devices or surgery to correct the problem. People with sleep apnea should never take sleeping pills as they
396 may prevent a person from awakening enough to breathe.

405 Source: National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, *Sleep Disorders*

Understanding

1. What are some of the effects of sleep disorders? _____

2. What is sleep apnea? Why does it happen? _____

3. Who is more likely to have sleep apnea? Why? _____

4. What does the word **mild** mean? _____

5. What are some causes of insomnia? _____

6. How common is it? _____

7. Who may be able to take sleeping pills and who shouldn't? Why? _____

Writing

Option A: Summarize the reading in your own words.

Option B: How do you sleep? Describe a typical night's sleep. What concerns do you have about your sleep?

Option C: Do you or someone you know have a sleeping disorder? How is it managed?
