

Most Common Sleep Disorders

Insomnia is a significant lack of high-quality sleep. It can be short-term or chronic. Insomnia may be caused by stress, a change in time zones or sleep schedule, poor bedtime habits, or an underlying medical or psychiatric condition (e.g. Depression, anxiety).

Sleep Apnea is a common disorder that can be very serious, and even life threatening. In sleep apnea, your breathing stops or gets very shallow while you are sleeping. Each pause in breathing typically lasts 10 to 20 seconds or more. These pauses can occur 20 to 30 times or more an hour. Primary symptom is persistent, loud snoring, typically never noticed by the sufferer!

The most common type of sleep apnea is **obstructive sleep apnea**. During sleep, enough air cannot flow into your lungs through your mouth and nose, even though you try to breathe. When this happens, the amount of oxygen in your blood may drop. Normal breaths then start again with a loud snort or choking sound.

Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS) is a sensory disorder causing an almost irresistible urge to move the legs. The urge to move the legs is usually due to uncomfortable, tingly, or creeping sensations that occur when at rest. Movement eases the feelings, but only for a while.

Narcolepsy is a disorder that causes a person to have difficulty staying awake. Narcolepsy can cause a person to suddenly fall asleep during the day.

These “sleep attacks” occur even after getting enough sleep at night. The unusual sleep pattern that people with narcolepsy have can affect their schooling, work, and social life. Falling asleep during activities like walking, driving, cooking, or talking. This can have dangerous results, both professionally and personally.

An important note: You can address most common sleep problems through lifestyle changes and improved sleep hygiene. However, it is important to see your doctor or a sleep specialist for a diagnosis if your sleep does not improve or if your partner observes continuous sleep disturbances. A doctor who specializes in sleep problems is most skilled in diagnosing and treating sleep disorders. Sometimes sleep specialist’s work out of a sleep center; others are independent.

Additional Information:

If you feel you have a sleeping problem and want to get additional help check out USC Sleep Disorder Center and make an appointment to see a doctor. <http://www.keckmedicine.org/sleep-disorders/>

For more information feel free to call CWFL at (213) 821-0800 or visit www.usc.edu/worklife