

How to Tell If You Have a Sleep Disorder

There are many people that have an undiagnosed sleep disorder. They may feel very sleepy during the day. They may have trouble falling to sleep or staying asleep. Friends or relatives may tell them they look very tired. They may experience mood changes, irritability or become overly emotional. Often they have difficulty paying attention, concentrating, or remembering things that are important. These are all symptoms of sleep deprivation, and possibly of a sleep disorder.

A person that has an undiagnosed sleep disorder will usually answer the question, "What is the problem with your sleep," with one of five answers. Those answers will be; "I have trouble falling asleep," "I have trouble staying awake," "I can't get up in the morning," "I seem to do strange things in my sleep" or "I can't sleep because of my partner." The particular answer chosen helps to narrow down the possibility of a specific type of sleep disorder.

When someone says "I can't fall asleep" it can mean several things. There could be a problem when first going to bed, after waking up in the middle of the night, or in the early morning hours.

Many people have the problem of not being able to fall asleep when they go to bed. This is called sleep latency. Sleep latency can be a very serious symptom of certain sleep disorders, including sleep onset insomnia, delayed sleep phase disorder, shift work, restless leg syndrome or paradoxical insomnia. Many times the problem is not being able to stay asleep, which is sleep fragmentation. Often a person with this complaint can fall to sleep easily when they go to bed, but wake up often throughout the night. Sleep disorders may include sleep maintenance insomnia, shift work. If a person

wakes up very early in the morning and cannot get back to sleep, it could be a sign of advanced sleep phase disorder or sleep maintenance insomnia.

If the answer to the question is “I can’t stay awake” and the person is falling asleep at inappropriate times there may be a sleep disorder such as narcolepsy , obstructive or central sleep apnea, periodic limb movement disorder, restless leg syndrome, shift work or advanced sleep phase disorder.

Those that say “I can’t get up in the morning” and take an hour or more to fully wake from their sleep may suffer from excessive sleep inertia. They are having difficulty making the transition from sleep to being awake. Sleep disorders that could be responsible for excessive sleep inertia are sleep apnea and delayed sleep phase disorder.

A person that answers the question with “I do strange things in my sleep” may find that their sleep is full of surprises. Sleepwalking, Sleep terrors, confusional arousals, REM sleep behavior disorder, nightmares, sleep-related eating disorder and bruxism are all types of sleep disorders known as parasomnias.

If a person answers “I can’t sleep because of my partner” snoring, sleep apnea, bruxism, restless leg syndrome, or periodic limb movement disorder may be the sleep disorder to blame.

How would you answer the question of “What is the problem with your sleep?”