

Sleep Disorders: When Counting Sheep Isn't Enough

By Heather Bremner Claverie



CATCHING ZZZ'S is not always easy. Between 50 million and 70 million U.S. adults report having some sort of sleep disorder, according to the American Sleep Association. And, of those millions of sleep-deprived Americans, a total of 48 percent reported snoring, 37.9 percent said they unintentionally fell asleep during the day and 4.7 percent admitted to dozing off while driving.

When an individual has a difficult time falling asleep, staying asleep or doesn't get quality sleep, a sleep disorder may be the root cause. Sleep disorders are a diverse lot. Ailments can range from restless leg syndrome and narcolepsy to obstructive sleep apnea and insomnia.

Although the amount of sleep one needs varies, most adults require between seven hours and nine hours every night, according to the National Sleep Foundation. So, what happens when those hours aren't met? Since sleep is critical to humans for both mental and physical health, a lack of it is linked to a myriad of issues. Mental health conditions, heart problems, difficulty concentrating, depression, weight problems and even a shorter life expectancy are some of the issues linked to sleep deprivation. And, nodding off behind the wheel is one of the most dangerous outcomes of sleep deprivation. The American Sleep Association says drowsy driving is responsible for 1,550 fatalities and 40,000 nonfatal injuries annually.

Sleep apnea, a disorder characterized by repetitive breathing pauses during sleep, can serve as the root cause of sleepiness. This condition can lead to a decrease in blood-oxygen levels that may cause individuals to wake up momentarily and

gasp. Although they may have had the disorder for years, many people with sleep apnea have no idea they suffer from it until they're diagnosed.

Insomnia is another common sleep disorder. When daily pressures start swirling through people's heads, many find it difficult to fall or stay asleep. Although healthcare providers can't always pinpoint the actual cause of insomnia, there are certain factors that can lead to restlessness. Primary insomnia can be caused by physical or emotional stress, or a dramatic schedule change such as a new baby or jet lag. But when secondary insomnia enters the picture, the source becomes more complicated. Restless leg syndrome, depression, anxiety, caffeine or alcohol may be the culprit.

Snuggle up to this good news: Sleep disorders are curable. Obstructive sleep apnea is often triggered by obesity, which means dropping some of that extra weight may reverse the condition. In addition, smoking, excessive drinking and drug use can all cause the tissues in the airways to relax and become blocked. Continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) therapy is one of the most common and effective treatments for sleep apnea. The CPAP machine, which is attached to a mask that fits into the nose, is worn during sleep and keeps the airways open by applying mild air pressure.

Since insomnia can be caused by a variety of factors, treatments also vary. Individuals suffering from anxiety or depression may find they can sleep after taking certain medications. And, while some physicians may prescribe sleep medications, these are usually just a temporary fix. Sleep therapy, cognitive behavior therapy, relaxation techniques and/or avoiding stimulants and alcohol may also help. In addition, simple changes such as revamping sleeping environments or eliminating sleep-zapping distractions from the bedroom may help alleviate insomnia.

In today's distraction-inducing society, a good night's sleep isn't necessarily something that comes naturally. Turning off the smart phone, diffusing some lavender and opening up a good book before turning in may be just the right recipe for some good old beauty sleep. ■

HEATHER BREMNER CLAVERIE is a contributing writer for *IG Living* magazine.

Breathe Better

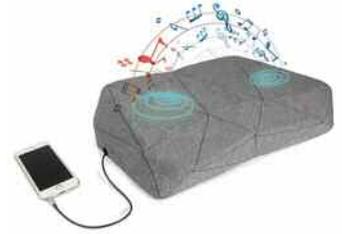
Since the most common and effective treatment for obstructive sleep apnea involves wearing a continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) mask, the market is filled with these devices. Yet, not all CPAP masks are equal. Noise level, fit, cost, size, effectiveness and smart options are some factors that many patients consider when making a choice. The ResMed AirSense 10 AutoSet appears to check all of those boxes. This compact CPAP is equipped with a built-in heated humidifier, runs quietly, tracks sleep and even has a special version for women. \$885; www.cpap.com



Sleep Soundly

Cuddling up to a pillow that emits white noise? Sounds like music to the ears of insomniacs. The PILO Classic Ergonomic Smart Music Pillow has made this a reality. The rock-shaped memory foam pillow has built-in sound speakers and connects to a sound sleep-aide app. The curved structure was designed to cradle the neck and head. In addition, the sleep-inducing pillow comes with a washable cotton case.

\$169; www.amazon.com



Regenerating Jammies

Although people spend at least eight hours a day sleeping, for many women, what they wear to bed is an afterthought. Old T-shirts, yoga pants or sweats are often thrown on. Yet, soft, durable and comfortable pajamas can help restore and recharge during the wee hours. Lunya pieces are designed with fabrics that increase blood flow while sleeping. The stylish sleepwear won't ride up, and has pockets that lay flat and straps that stay put.

Prices vary; www.lunya.co

Shopping Guide to Sleep Aids



Stick on Sleep

A little melatonin can go a long way in the face of sleep disorders. Nite Nite Patches are transdermal patches designed to help induce sleep. Stick on the all-natural patches and wait for the body to slowly and evenly absorb the therapeutic combination of melatonin, hops and valerian root. What's great is the body absorbs it over a 12-hour period, and it doesn't involve taking pills. \$12 for eight patches;

www.uncommongoods.com



Spray on Sleep

Ready for that long-coveted beauty sleep? This Works Deep Sleep Spray combination of lavender, vetiver and wild chamomile oils is designed to help ease anxiety and induce sleep faster. Spritz the calming fragrance onto some pillows and fall into a deep slumber. This spray is suitable to use during pregnancy. \$29; www.dermstore.com



Weighted Down

Heavy blankets have been shown to help with sleep, so why not eye masks, too? The NodPod weighted sleep mask blocks out light while creating perfect conditions for snoozing away. The mask is snap- and strap-free and can also be chilled for headache or puffy eye relief. It molds to the contours of the face and is machine washable. \$29.95; www.thegrommet.com/nodpod-travel-weighted-eye-pillow

