

Sleep and Epilepsy

Can lack of sleep trigger a seizure?

Yes, tiredness and lack of sleep can trigger seizures for some people. Some types of epilepsy seizures can happen as someone is waking up and for a few hours afterwards.

People with epilepsy may have an irregular sleep pattern. Seizures during the night can disrupt sleep. Seizures during the day can affect the next night's sleep. For some people the effects of having a seizure can upset their sleep pattern for several days afterwards. Some types of epilepsy are more likely to cause sleep problems.

Why does lack of sleep trigger a seizure?

Sleep can affect seizures in many different ways. During normal sleep-wake cycles, there are changes in the brain's electrical and hormonal activity. These changes can be related to why some people have more seizures during sleep than others, and why not getting enough sleep can trigger seizures. Some people's seizures are tied very closely with their sleep. They may have all of their seizures while sleeping, when falling asleep or waking up. For others, sleep may not be a common trigger, or the connection is less clear. For example, not getting enough sleep may trigger seizures only when other triggers are going on too.

What causes sleep problems?

There are many things that can affect a person's sleep and make them more likely to have seizures. Here are a few things to consider:

- **Not getting enough sleep** – There is no magic number of hours of sleep that everyone should get. Some people do well on 5 hours a night, others need 8 to 10 hours or more. In general, at least 7 to 8 hours of sleep a night is considered healthy, but the quality of sleep also needs to be considered.
 - **Not getting 'good quality' sleep** - Good sleep means feeling rested when you wake up and having energy during the day. There are many things that can prevent you from getting good quality sleep. For example, waking up often or having a very restless sleep.
 - **Having seizures at night** - Seizures at night can wake people up or disrupt their sleep so they do not get a good quality of sleep. Someone who has many seizures during the night may have trouble functioning during the day. Not getting enough sleep or being sleep deprived can lead to having more seizures during the day.
 - **Difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep, also called insomnia** - Sleep problems can arise from being unable to fall asleep, waking up often or waking up too early. Seizures, moods, and medicine side effects can all cause insomnia.
 - **Mood** - Difficulty sleeping is a common symptom of depression and anxiety. If sleep problems last longer than 2 weeks and/or you have other symptoms of mood problems, speak to your doctor or mental health specialist.
 - **Unhealthy lifestyle** - Eating or drinking late at night, eating large amounts before sleep, drinking coffee or other drinks with caffeine, or drinking alcohol in the evening can worsen sleep.
 - **Medications** - Some seizure medications can make people sleepy. Others can make it harder to fall asleep. The times you take seizure medications may also make a difference.
 - **Sleep disorders** - Sometimes people cannot sleep because they have a sleep disorder, like sleep apnea, restless legs or other sleep problems. Sleep disorders can leave a person sleep deprived and tired. It is not unusual to see people with seizures also have sleep disorders.
-

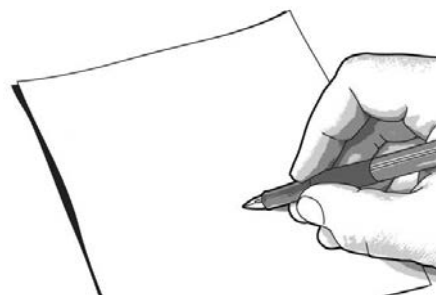
What is sleep hygiene?

Sleep hygiene includes habits or practices to help you have good quality nighttime sleep and full daytime alertness.

How can I improve the quality of my sleep?

Here are 10 ways to help improve the quality of your sleep:

1. **Avoid napping during the day.** It can disturb the normal pattern of sleep and wakefulness.
2. **Avoid stimulants such as caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol too close to bedtime.** It is best to avoid caffeine (in coffee, tea, cola drinks, chocolate, and some medications), alcohol or nicotine (cigarettes) for at least 4 to 6 hours before going to bed. These substances act as stimulants and interfere with the ability to fall and stay asleep.
3. **Exercise.** Do vigorous exercise in the morning or late afternoon. Do a relaxing exercise, like yoga or tai chi, before bed to help you get a restful night's sleep.
4. **Avoid food before bed.** Stay away from large meals close to bedtime. Also dietary changes can cause sleep problems, if someone is struggling with a sleep problem, it is not a good time to start experimenting with spicy dishes. And, remember, chocolate has caffeine.
5. **Get outside.** This is important for older people who may not go outside often. Light exposure helps maintain a healthy sleep-wake cycle.
6. **Have a bedtime routine.** Try to avoid emotionally upsetting conversations and activities before trying to go to sleep. Do not dwell on or bring your problems to bed.



7. **Your bed is for sleep.** It is not a good idea to use your bed to watch TV, listen to the radio or read.
8. **Make sure that the sleep environment is pleasant and relaxing.** Make sure your bed is comfortable, the room temperature is not too hot or cold, or too bright.
9. **Shower time.** Having a hot shower 1 to 2 hours before bedtime can be helpful as it will raise your body temperature, causing you to feel sleepy.
10. **Keep daytime routine the same.** Even if you have a bad night sleep and are tired it is important that you try to keep your daytime activities the same as you had planned. That is, do not avoid activities because you feel tired, as this can cause restlessness at night.

How does someone know if his or her sleep hygiene is poor?

Sleep disturbances and daytime sleepiness are the most telling signs of poor sleep hygiene. If you have a sleep problem, look at your sleep hygiene. It may take some time for the changes to have a positive effect, so be patient and consistent.

How do I know the best sleep hygiene routine for me?

If you take too long to fall asleep or wake up during the night, consider changing your bedtime habits. Most importantly, maintain a regular sleep-wake schedule throughout the week and consider how much time you spend in bed, which could be too much or too little.