In-Lab Sleep Studies: Essential Information for Patients

Sleep apnea is a common sleep disorder in which people may experience brief pauses in their breathing during sleep.[1]

There are 2 main types of sleep apnea: central sleep apnea (CSA) and **obstructive sleep apnea (OSA)**. **OSA** is more common.[1]

What is an in-lab sleep study, or polysomnography?

Polysomnography (PSG) is a type of sleep study, typically performed in a lab, that is used to diagnose OSA. The test monitors your breathing patterns, airflow, oxygen levels, heart rate, brain activity, and movement while you sleep.[2,3]

PSG measures how many times you have pauses (apneas) or partial pauses (hypopneas) in your breathing when you sleep. On average, having 5 or more of these pauses in 1 hour of sleep would mean you have OSA.[2,3]

What is an in-lab sleep study like?

When you arrive at the sleep lab, staff will show you to your room and help place small, painless sensors on your body, usually around your chest, over a fingertip, under your nose and mouth, and around your head and face. You can read and relax in bed until it is time to go to sleep. Staff will be available to help with any issues during the night and to remove the sensors in the morning.[3,4]

How do I get an in-lab sleep study?

Step 1: talk to your doctor	Your doctor or healthcare professional will assess your sleep and evaluate risk of obstructive sleep apnea.[4-6]
Step 2: visit a sleep specialist	If your doctor suspects you have OSA or another sleep disorder, they may refer you to a sleep specialist who can decide whether you should have a sleep study done.[4-6]
Step 3: sleep specialist orders the test	The sleep specialist will look at any other health conditions you may have and decide whether you are a candidate for an at-home test or an in-lab study, and they will order the test that's right for you.[4,7]
Step 4: complete the test at the sleep lab	At the sleep lab, you will go to a private room. A sleep technologist will attach sensors as appropriate, and you will sleep with them attached to your body. This is a painless process, and the sensors have been designed to minimally interfere with your sleep. In the morning, the sensors will be removed, and you will be free to go home.[3,4]
Step 5: follow up with your doctor	After your test, you should hear from you sleep doctor to schedule a follow-up appointment to talk about your results and a treatment plan, if you are diagnosed with OSA or another sleep disorder.[1-4]

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How do I get ready for my in-lab sleep study?

Before test day:

Discuss your medications with your doctor. They may advise you not to use medications that could affect your test results.[3]

On test day:

Avoid caffeine and alcohol because they may change your sleep patterns.[3]

Follow your normal bedtime routine as much as possible but try to shut off electronics 30-60 minutes before bed.[3,8]

Wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothes to the sleep lab. You might be asked to change into a hospital gown, but comfortable clothing can help you relax.[3]

Pack an overnight bag. Bring any personal items you might need for an overnight stay, such as a toothbrush, toothpaste, and a change of clothes.[3]

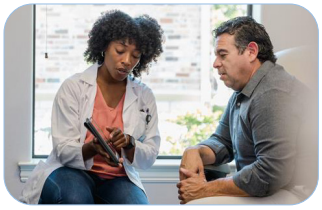
Shower but avoid hair products like gels, oils, or sprays that may interfere with the test sensors.[3]

Avoid naps to make sure you are tired enough to sleep that night.[3]

Be sure to follow up with your doctor!

If you have OSA, it is important to start treatment as early as possible to prevent any negative health effects.[2]

After your sleep study, discuss your results with your sleep doctor to decide on next steps.[1-4]



Is what I've heard about sleep studies true?

MYTH
Sleep study tests are uncomfortable and painful.

FACT
The sensors and wires may feel a bit odd but should not be painful, and most people adjust to them quickly.[3]

MYTH
Sleep studies are only for people who have extreme sleep problems.

FACT
Sleep studies can be used to diagnose even mild sleep issues. Sleep quality is an important part of your health, so talk to your doctor about any sleep concerns you may have.[2-5]

MYTH
Sleep studies are only performed in hospitals or sleep labs.

FACT
There are options for at-home sleep tests. Talk to your doctor about whether these tests could be a good fit for you.[3,7]

MYTH
Once I'm diagnosed with OSA, I'll be on a breathing machine for the rest of my life.

FACT
Although continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) therapy is a common and effective treatment for OSA, it's not the only option. Your doctor will work with you to find the best treatment for you.[2,5,7]

1. Mayo Clinic. Accessed November 12, 2024. https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/sleep-apnea/symptoms-causes/syc-20377631 2. Gottlieb DJ, Punjabi NM. *JAMA*. 2020;323(14):1389-1400. 3. Cleveland Clinic. Accessed October 20, 2024. https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diagnostics/12131-sleep-study-polysomnography 4. Sleep Foundation. Accessed November 14, 2024. https://www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-studies/how-does-a-sleep-study-work 5. Healthline. Accessed November 14, 2024. https://www.healthline.com/health/sleep/how-to-choose-a-sleep-specialist#when-to-see-a-specialist 6. Sleep Foundation. Accessed November 14, 2024. https://www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-studies/how-much-does-a-sleep-study-cost 7. Kapur VK, et al. *J Clin Sleep Med*. 2017;13(3):479-504. 8. Sleep Foundation. Accessed October 25, 2024. https://www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-hygiene