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Why Sleep Assessments Should Be a Key Part of Your Primary Care Routine

What is sleep health?

- Sleep health is a multifaceted concept of sleep-wakefulness patterns tailored to personal, societal, and environmental needs, promoting overall well-being¹
- Sleep health is not solely about getting the right amount of sleep; it also includes the timing, regularity, satisfaction, quality, and efficiency of sleep¹

Why is it important to discuss sleep with your patients?



1 in 3 adults in the US report not getting enough sleep every day¹

~50-70 MILLION

adult Americans

have chronic sleep disorders²

Types of sleep disorders include³:



Snoring and sleep apnea



Insomnia



Circadian rhythm disorders



Movement disorders



Parasomnia



Hypersomnolence

Chronic sleep disorders can lead to^{2,3}:



Brain fog



Depression and irritability



Type 2 diabetes



Obesity



Heart disease



Dementia

How can you integrate sleep assessment into routine visits?

In the current paradigm of care, the PCP may be best positioned to screen and diagnose patients with sleep disorders.⁴

- ✓ Incorporate questions about sleep patterns, duration, and quality and daytime fatigue into electronic medical records or patient intake forms.⁵⁻⁷
- ✓ If responses suggest potential sleep-related issues, consider completing a comprehensive sleep evaluation, which may include the Epworth Sleepiness Scale or STOP-Bang.⁵⁻⁷
- ✓ Assess patients who may be at higher risk for sleep disorders because of conditions such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, atrial fibrillation, heart disease, or stroke.⁷

How are sleep disorders diagnosed?

If you suspect your patient may have a sleep disorder, it may be beneficial for your patient to undergo a sleep study for further evaluation.

Sleep study options include home sleep apnea testing (HSAT) or polysomnography (PSG), based on clinical presentation and patient preferences.⁷



Polysomnography, typically performed in a sleep lab, is recommended for diagnosing sleep disorders in the following patient populations:

- Patients who may be at increased risk of non-obstructive sleep-disordered breathing, including central sleep apnea, significant hypoxemia, or hypoventilation
- Patients showing symptoms of non-respiratory sleep disorders that require attended sleep evaluation, such as parasomnia and sleep-related movements disorders
- Patients with medical conditions or other factors that could potentially affect the accuracy of HSAT results, or influence data collection and interpretation

When should you involve a sleep specialist?

Any licensed healthcare clinician can order HSAT, and the testing company facilitates review of data and result interpretation by a sleep specialist. Polysomnography generally requires the involvement of a sleep specialist for ordering, interpretation, and diagnosis.⁹

Discuss good sleep practices with your patients.^{10,11}

Share the following tips to help patients best position themselves to sleep well each night:



Maintain a regular sleep schedule, with consistent bedtimes and wake times.



Follow the same routine when preparing for bed, including time to wind down.



Before bedtime, dim lights and unplug from electronics to allow melatonin production.



Use heavy curtains or an eye mask to block light and use earplugs to muffle noise.



Reduce alcohol and caffeine consumption, especially in the late afternoon and evening.



During the daytime, minimize naps and be physically active.

1. Ramos AR, et al. *Prev Chronic Dis.* 2023;20:E77. 2. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. Accessed November 18, 2024. <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/sleep-deprivation> 3. Cleveland Clinic. Accessed December 18, 2024. <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/11429-sleep-disorders> 4. Aurora RN, Quan SF. *J Clin Sleep Med.* 2016;12(8):1185-1187. 5. Redline S. *JAMA.* 2017;317(4):368-370. 6. Henry O, et al. *J Prim Care Community Health.* 2022;13:21501319211068969. 7. Gottlieb DJ, Punjabi NM. *JAMA.* 2020;323(14):1389-1400. 8. Hussein O, et al. *Mo Med.* 2024;121(1):60-65. 9. Rosen IM, et al. *J Clin Sleep Med.* 2017;13(10):1205-1207. 10. Sleep Foundation. Accessed October 25, 2024. <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-hygiene> 11. National Health Service. Accessed January 29, 2025. <https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-wellbeing-tips/how-to-fall-asleep-faster-and-sleep-better/>