

# SLEEP IN *women*

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The American Academy  
*of Sleep Medicine*  
[www.aasmnet.org](http://www.aasmnet.org)

# HOW DOES BEING A WOMEN AFFECT *my sleep?*

Everyone sleeps, but women face unique sleep considerations. As a woman, you may be more at risk for certain sleep problems or have different symptoms of sleep disorders than men.

At different times in your life, you may have different sleep issues.

**MENSTRUAL CYCLE:** Women may have sleep problems right before or during menstruation. Restless legs syndrome is more common during that time, or women may have difficulty sleeping due to pain.

**PREGNANCY:** Many women experience changes in their sleep patterns while pregnant. In the first trimester, you may find that you need to sleep more. Tiredness can also be a sign of low iron due to pregnancy. In the third trimester, you may have trouble falling or staying asleep due to discomfort from the growing baby. Pregnant women are also more at risk for sleep disorders such as obstructive sleep apnea and restless legs syndrome.

# TAKE A LOOK AT DIFFERENT SLEEP ISSUES

## HOW CAN I SLEEP BETTER IF I'M PREGNANT OR A NEW MOTHER?

- Try to get at least 8 hours in bed each night
- Allow yourself a 45-minute to 1-hour nap during the day if needed. Try to nap when your baby is napping

**MENOPAUSE:** During and after menopause, many women experience difficulties sleeping. Changes in your hormones can make it harder for you to sleep through the night. These hormonal changes also increase your risk for obstructive sleep apnea.



# WOMEN AND SLEEP DISORDERS

**OBSTRUCTIVE SLEEP APNEA:** Obstructive Sleep Apnea, or OSA, is a common sleep disorder. If you have OSA, it means that your airway collapses part or all of the way while you are sleeping. There is growing awareness that OSA affects women.

## AM I AT RISK FOR OSA?

***You may be at an increased risk for OSA if you:***

- Are overweight
- Have polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS)
- Are pregnant

## ***Symptoms of OSA include:***

- Loud or frequent snoring
- Daytime sleepiness or tiredness
- Choking or gasping while you sleep

In addition to these symptoms, there are specific signs that are more common in women that can indicate OSA.



### ***Symptoms of OSA in Women:***

- Feeling like you don't have any energy during the day
- Having a headache when you wake up in the morning
- Feeling depressed
- Having trouble falling asleep

**OSA is a treatable disorder. Please talk with your health care provider about your options.**

**INSOMNIA:** Insomnia means that you have trouble falling or staying asleep most nights. Insomnia is more common in women than in men.

## AM I AT RISK FOR INSOMNIA?

*You may be at an increased risk for insomnia if you:*

- Are stressed
- Have depression or anxiety
- Are over age 65

There are many possible treatments, including medications, stress-reducing exercises, and behaviors that promote sleep. Speak with your health care provider if you think you may have insomnia.

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*Treating insomnia may improve depression and anxiety.*

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**RESTLESS LEGS SYNDROME:** Restless Legs Syndrome, or RLS, happens when you feel like you have an overwhelming urge to move your legs. You may also feel burning or itching inside your legs. RLS can make it hard for you to go to sleep, and you may be tired the next day.

## AM I AT RISK FOR RLS?

***You may be at an increased risk for RLS if you:***

- Have diabetes
- Have low iron
- Are pregnant
- Are over age 45

RLS is common during pregnancy and usually goes away after the baby is born. RLS can be treated with behavioral changes, iron supplements, and medications. Talk with your health care provider if you think that you may have RLS.

### **SLEEP-RELATED EATING DISORDER:**

Women are more likely to have sleep-related eating disorders. These disorders can involve eating while asleep or eating at night while awake.

If you think that you have a sleep-related eating disorder, you should contact your health care provider.

**Speak with your health care provider if you have difficulty sleeping or think you may have a sleep disorder.**

For more information, see [www.sleepcentral.org](http://www.sleepcentral.org)

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## **Dr. AASM Member**

2510 N. Frontage Road

Darien, IL 60561

Phone: 630-737-9700

Fax: 630-737-9790

E-mail: [email@aasm.net](mailto:email@aasm.net)

Website: [www.aasmnet.org](http://www.aasmnet.org)

Office Hours: 8:00am–5:00pm