



Patient education: What is a sleep study? (The Basics)

Written by the doctors and editors at UpToDate

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What is a sleep study?

A sleep study is a test that measures how well you sleep and checks for sleep problems. For some sleep studies, you stay overnight in a sleep lab at a hospital or sleep center.

In other cases, your doctor can give you a portable sleep monitor to use at home, so you don't have to spend the night in the sleep lab. But you should use a portable monitor only if:

- Your doctor thinks that you might have a condition called "sleep apnea." Sleep apnea makes you stop breathing for short periods while you are asleep.
- You do not have other serious medical problems, such as heart disease or lung disease.

What happens during a sleep study?

Before you go to sleep, a technician attaches small, sticky patches called "electrodes" to your head, chest, and legs. They will also place a small tube beneath your nose and might wrap 1 or 2 belts around your chest.

Each of these items has wires that connect to monitors. The monitors record your movement, brain activity, breathing, and other body functions while you sleep.

Why might my doctor order a sleep study?

Your doctor will order a sleep study if they think that you have sleep apnea or a different condition. Examples of other sleep-related conditions include those that make you:

- Have an uncomfortable feeling in your legs when you try to fall asleep, or sudden jerking leg movements while you sleep
- Feel very sleepy during the day and fall asleep all of a sudden

- Do odd things while you sleep, such as moving your arms and legs, shouting, or walking

How should I prepare for a sleep study?

On the day of your sleep study, you should:

- Avoid alcohol.
- Avoid drinking coffee, tea, sodas, and other drinks that have caffeine in the afternoon and evening.
- Take all of your regular medicines, unless your doctor tells you not to.

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Topic 86220 Version 8.0

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