



## Sleep Troubles And What To Do About Them

(NAPSA)—We've all used the excuse "I'm too tired" at some point in our lives to avoid completing a task or getting a job done. In fact, the National Sleep Foundation found that 40 percent of American adults are so sleepy during the day that it interferes with their daily activities.

More than ever, Americans aren't getting enough sleep or are having trouble sleeping. Drowsiness causes at least 100,000 automobile accidents a year, according to the National Highway Safety Administration, and leaves people less productive at work and more at risk for health problems.

The solution is to make sleep a priority. In general, adults require seven to eight hours of sleep each night, teenagers need about nine hours and infants require 16 hours of sleep per day. However, the amount of sleep each person needs varies, so how do you know if you're getting enough sleep? Experts say that if you feel drowsy during the day, even during boring activities, you haven't had enough sleep.

Since sleep deprivation can be dangerous to your health and to others around, consider the do's and don'ts listed in the graphic at right. If these simple lifestyle changes do not help and your sleep troubles continue, you may have a sleep disorder and should see your family physician or osteopathic physician (D.O.). You could suffer from common sleep disorders, such as insomnia, sleep apnea or restless legs syndrome.

*Insomnia* is simply the inability to fall asleep. For short-term insomnia, a doctor may prescribe medication such as sleeping pills. In serious cases, the doctor may suggest alternate medications or light therapy.

*Sleep apnea* is a disorder that causes temporary interruptions in your breathing while you

### Sleep Time Do's And Don'ts

- Don't consume caffeine, nicotine or alcohol for four to six hours before bedtime.
- Do develop a relaxing routine to cue your body that it's time for sleep, such as taking a warm bath or listening to soothing music.
- Don't watch television or do work in bed; make your bed a sleep-only zone.
- Do try to wake up around the same time every day, even on weekends.
- Don't exercise four to six hours before bedtime.



sleep. In extreme cases, sleep apnea can lead to sudden death from respiratory arrest. If you think you have sleep apnea, see a physician immediately. Treatment methods will vary.

Most common in adults over 60, though possible at any age, *restless legs syndrome* (RLS) causes crawling, tickling, pricking or tingling sensations in the legs and feet. This constant nighttime leg movement causes repeated awakenings and fragmented sleep. See your physician if you think you suffer from RLS because in most cases, this condition is only relieved by medication.

Making sleep a priority in your life will improve your health, work, safety and relationships. Remember, if you think you suffer from a sleeping disorder, see your physician to find out the best way to get your sleep problem under control.

D.O.s are fully licensed physicians able to prescribe medication and perform surgery. They treat people, not just symptoms.

To learn more about D.O.s and osteopathic medicine, visit the American Osteopathic Association's Web site at [www.aoa-net.org](http://www.aoa-net.org) or call toll-free 1-800-621-1773.