



American  
Heart  
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# SLEEP DISORDERS AFFECT CARDIOVASCULAR HEALTH

Getting enough sleep (7-9 hours for adults), and restful sleep, is essential to good heart health. Sleep disorders interfere with healthy sleep and affect the lives of up to 70 million people in the U.S.

More than 80 different sleep disorders have been identified. The most common are insomnia, narcolepsy, restless legs syndrome and sleep apnea. Research has shown they may increase the risk of cardiovascular disease (CVD) and hurt heart health.

## How sleep disorders hurt heart health

Poor sleep, often caused by sleep disorders, contributes to risk factors for CVD such as:

- Obesity, high blood pressure and diabetes
- Stress
- Inflammation
- Depression

## Insomnia

Insomnia keeps people awake or sleeping fitfully, leading to daytime drowsiness and causing memory and cognitive problems.

About half of people in the U.S. experience short-term insomnia. Chronic insomnia affects 6% to 10% of the population. People with insomnia may have:

- 45% higher risk of CVD
- 54% higher risk of stroke within 4 years

## Narcolepsy

People with narcolepsy experience excessive daytime sleepiness and have trouble regulating their sleep-wake cycles.

Narcolepsy may affect more than 200,000 people in the U.S. They are at greater risk for:

- High blood pressure
- Heart attack
- Heart failure
- Stroke

## Restless legs syndrome

People with restless legs syndrome (RLS) feel uncomfortable and unsettled because of periodic limb movement, especially at night when they're trying to sleep.

About 7% to 10% of the U.S. population has RLS. It's more prevalent among women and more severe among people who are middle-aged or older.

People with RLS seem to be at greater risk for cardiovascular diseases.

## Sleep apnea

People with sleep apnea can't breathe normally during sleep. The stop-and-start breathing makes it hard to get enough oxygen and disturbs slumber.

About 30 million people may have sleep apnea, though far fewer are diagnosed. Sleep apnea has been linked to higher rates of:

- High blood pressure
- Stroke
- Coronary artery disease
- Heart failure

## What to do now

If you think you have a sleep disorder, consult with your doctor promptly. If you've been diagnosed with one, get with your doctor about how to address your risk of CVD.

For more information about sleep disorders, including their symptoms, visit [www.heart.org/sleepdisorders](http://www.heart.org/sleepdisorders)