



Assessment

Overview

Although you may find you have some of the signs and symptoms described in this course, you should not diagnose yourself with a sleep disorder. Please visit your doctor or sleep specialist to discuss your concerns. Your doctor or sleep specialist will diagnose your sleep difficulties based on a combination of information gathered from you about your:

- sleep complaints
- sleep habits
- leisure habits
- diet and exercise habits
- weight
- medical history and physical health
- sleep schedules and habits
- family history of sleep difficulties
- emotional health and stress management
- travel, work schedules, and personal histories
- your use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco, and stimulants like caffeine

Also, your doctor or sleep specialist may suggest:

- blood tests
- physical exams
- sleep tests
- questionnaires

In addition, these are some specific ways that doctors and sleep specialists might seek to gather information about your sleep schedules, sleep quality, and amount of sleep:

Sleep Diary

A Sleep Diary is the best way to track detailed information such as when you go to bed, how long it takes you to fall asleep, how often you wake up at night, what time you wake up in the morning, and if you nap during the day.

Sleep Study

Your doctor may recommend a sleep study to assess what your body is doing during sleep. There are several types of sleep studies. They are all painless

- **Polysomnogram or "PSG"**
This is the most common type of sleep study and usually requires an overnight stay at a sleep center. This study records brain activity, eye movements, and heart rate. A PSG also records the amount of oxygen in your blood, air movement through your nose while you breathe, snoring, and chest movements. The chest movements show whether you're making an effort to breathe.



Assessment

- **Polysomnogram or "PSG" (cont)**

Sleep studies are done in rooms that may resemble hotel rooms. A technician makes the room comfortable for you and sets the temperature to your liking. Sticky patches with sensors called electrodes are placed on your scalp, face, chest, limbs, and a finger. Elastic belts are placed around your chest and belly. Wires attached to the sensors transmit the data to a computer in the next room. The wires are very thin and flexible. They are bundled together so they don't restrict movement, disrupt your sleep, or cause other discomfort.

- **Home-Based Sleep Study with a Portable Monitor**

Your doctor may recommend a home-based sleep study with a portable monitor. The portable monitor will record some of the same information as a PSG. Home-based testing is only appropriate for some people, mostly those without major medical problems. Talk with your doctor to find out whether a portable monitor is an option for you. If your doctor recommends this test, you'll need to visit a sleep center or your doctor's office to pick up the equipment and learn how to use it. In some cases, a technician will come to your home to help you prepare for the study.

- **Multiple Sleep Latency Test (MSLT)**

This study measures how sleepy you are during the day. It is used to find disorders of daytime sleepiness like narcolepsy. This test often involves sensors placed on your scalp, face, and chin. These sensors record brain activity and eye movements. They show various stages of sleep and how long it takes you to fall asleep. Sometimes your breathing is checked during an MSLT. The MSLT records whether you fall asleep during the test, and what types and stages of sleep you have.

- **Maintenance of Wakefulness Test**

This daytime sleep study measures your ability to stay awake and alert. Sensors on your scalp, face, and chin are used to measure when you're awake or asleep. You sit quietly on a bed in a comfortable position and look straight ahead. Then you simply try to stay awake for a period of time. Results can show whether your inability to stay awake is a safety concern. Results also can show how you're responding to treatment for your sleep difficulties.

- **Actigraphy**

You don't have to go to a sleep center for this test. An actigraph is a small device that's usually worn like a wristwatch. You can do your normal daily routine while you wear it. You remove it while bathing or swimming. Your doctor may ask you to wear the device for several days and nights, to give your doctor a better idea about your sleep habits. Actigraphy might be used with a PSG or alone.

What to Expect After a Sleep Study

You won't receive a diagnosis right away— it may take a couple of weeks to get the results. A sleep specialist and, perhaps, your primary care doctor will review the results of your sleep study. They will use your medical history, your sleep history, and the test results to make a diagnosis. Usually, your doctor, nurse, or sleep specialist will explain the test results and work with you to develop a treatment plan.