

PA

ISSUE 11, Winter 2021

HEALTH

YOUR GUIDE TO FITNESS & WELL-BEING

A good night's sleep.

Open your eyes to the best ways
to get your snooze on.



Say no to SAD

Don't ignore the snore

Welcome to the night shift

Find us online:
geisinger.org/magazine

WELCOME

Have an amazing health story to share? We'd love to hear it. And maybe we'll feature it in an upcoming edition. Send us a note:

PAHealth@geisinger.edu



Winter is here again. Days are shorter, nights are longer and it's getting colder every day. Is it any wonder so many animals hibernate?

You and I don't have that luxury, but that doesn't mean sleep isn't important. And we're exploring just how important it is — for kids, for teens and for adults — in our winter issue.

Does seasonal affective disorder bring your energy level down? We'll look at how to manage it.

Does insomnia keep you staring at the clock? Some tips on sleep aids might help you find the one that's right for you.

Maybe someone else's snoring is keeping you awake. It could be sleep apnea. Read about it here: the causes, the symptoms, the treatments and what you (or your bedmate) can expect from a night at a sleep lab.

And since hospitals never sleep, we wanted to introduce you to some people who work the night shift. I've done it myself, and I know it has its own set of challenges — and rewards.

I hope you enjoy this edition of *PA Health* and I wish you and your family a festive (and restful) season.

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Counting sheep isn't working? Try this instead.

A simple breathing exercise to calm the mind and relax the body might be just what you need to escape insomnia — and it's been known to help with anxiety, too.

- Inhale for a count of 6.
- Hold your breath for a count of 5.
- Exhale for a count of 7.

Repeat this exercise until you feel drowsy. It's okay to expand the count once you're more comfortable with it.



Know where the term “three-dog night” came from?

Before central heating, people slept with dogs for warmth. A chilly night called for one dog. On a colder night, you needed two. In the depths of winter, only three dogs would do.

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Catching *Zzzzzs* benefits your brain *and* body.

By Kayleigh DeMace

Boost your health tonight and every night.

Sleep is a fundamental part of life. And while it's not entirely understood by scientists, we know it has a huge effect on how we function during the day. Dream up ways to make it a priority, because powering down for the night recharges your health.

Unleash your brain power

A good night's rest lets your brain work at maximum capacity. That raises your productivity, your ability to concentrate and your emotional and social intelligence. If you're well rested, you won't be yawning as your friend bemoans a breakup. And you'll find the right words to encourage an overworked colleague.

Sharpened memory and problem-solving skills are another perk of a good night's rest, no matter your age.

Revitalize your body

From lifting weights to running faster, sleep means your muscles can fully rest and recover so you won't drag your feet at the gym.

With enough sleep, you'll lower your risk of heart disease, heart attack, stroke, depression and inflammation. You can even enhance your immune system.

When the sandman won't come

Sleep deficiency doesn't target one age group — it happens to children and adults alike. Stress, anxiety, narcolepsy and sleep apnea can all cause sleep deprivation. Some of the less-obvious effects of poor sleep? Obesity, an increased sense of pain and a weaker response to vaccines.

So, how can you sleep better?

Hack your sleep and wake up refreshed with a few tweaks:

Set a routine. Get up and go to bed at the same time daily. Even on weekends.

Don't sleep too much. If you've had enough sleep, don't sleep more.

Turn off your phone. Put the phone away at least an hour before bed. Exposure to blue light can shorten your slumber.

Have a medical issue interfering with your sleep? Talk to your doctor. They'll help you find the best treatment to improve your Zzzs.

A sleep medicine specialist explains more about why you need quality shut-eye: [Geisinger.org/SleepDeeply](https://www.geisinger.org/SleepDeeply)

How much sleep do you need?

The right amount of sleep depends on age. The CDC recommends, in one 24-hour period:

0 – 3 months: 14–17 hours (up to 19 hours)*

4 – 12 months: 12–16 hours (including naps)*

1 – 2: 11–14 hours (including naps)

3 – 5: 10–13 hours (including naps)

6 – 12: 9–12 hours

13 – 18: 8–10 hours

18 – 60: 7 or more hours

61 – 64: 7–9 hours

65+: 7–8 hours

**Always put your infant on their back to sleep.*



Seasonal affective disorder: *Don't* settle for SAD

By Beth Kaszuba

Hibernating because you feel down? Treatment can help.

It's one thing to snuggle under the covers because you want to ward off winter's chill. But if longer, darker days have you:

- Feeling depressed
- Oversleeping
- Eating too much, especially carbs
- Gaining weight
- Avoiding social activities

You might have seasonal affective disorder, or SAD. If you think that might be the case, reach out to your healthcare provider or a mental health specialist — the sooner the better. Once you're diagnosed, treatment can help.

SAD is caused by several factors. Among them? A disturbed circadian rhythm, which is your body's natural 24-hour cycle. How your body regulates serotonin, a hormone that helps with sleep. Lowered eye sensitivity to blue light. And, of course, genetics.

To ease the symptoms, your doctor or sleep specialist might recommend talk therapy, antidepressants, vitamin D and/or light therapy, which involves exposure to certain types of light for specific times each day.

Of course, don't pursue any course of treatment without checking with your doctor. But with help, you may have a (literally) brighter winter.

Sunrise, sunset

On June 21, the summer solstice, the sun sets at 8:30 in our region — after shining for nearly 15 hours. Compare that to Dec. 21, the winter solstice, when the sun sets at 4:37 p.m., after about 9 hours of daylight. That's **six extra hours** to wear pajamas!



Sleep aids: What will have you dozing? And which are duds?

Lots of products and practices promise to have you drifting off to dreamland in no time. We rate some popular options.

Z – Roll over and ignore

ZZ – Worth a try

ZZZ – Get ready for some stellar slumber

Melatonin: **ZZ**

If your circadian rhythm is disturbed, this natural sleep-inducing hormone can truly help you better control your sleep times. But you may be drowsy the next day, so consider your morning plans. And check with your doctor before using.

Pillows “as seen on TV”: **Z**

One person's dream pillow is another's nightmare. Don't trust “one pillow cures all” claims. Your best bet might be less expensive.

Meditation: **ZZZ**

Research shows that meditation and mindfulness can fight insomnia. And any practice that calms us down and centers us in the moment has to be good. We'd definitely hit the cushion before hitting the pillow.

Dousing blue light: **ZZZ**

It's true, the light from screens we take to bed or keep on the nightstand can interfere with circadian rhythms. Shut down early for better shuteye.

Dozing with dogs (and cats): **Z**

Pets are cute. And snuggly. And warm. But they also tend to move around, make noise and manage to dominate the whole bed, even if they only weigh a few pounds. It's best to set them gently in their own beds before sleeping.



Are all teenagers night owls?

By Paula Franken

Staying up into the wee hours, then sleeping half the day is a well-worn teen stereotype. (And maybe one you recognize — or remember.) But what's the reason behind it?

Teenagers need between eight and 10 hours of sleep to be their best. And when schedules are packed with school, sports, clubs, friends and jobs, the only time many of them find to unwind is late at night — after the family's in bed and the house is theirs.

According to the Sleep Foundation, teens' tendency to become night owls is partly biological. Their bodies take longer to start producing melatonin, the hormone that helps promote sleep. So teenagers just don't get tired until later. By then, it's too late to get the sleep they need and make it to school on time.

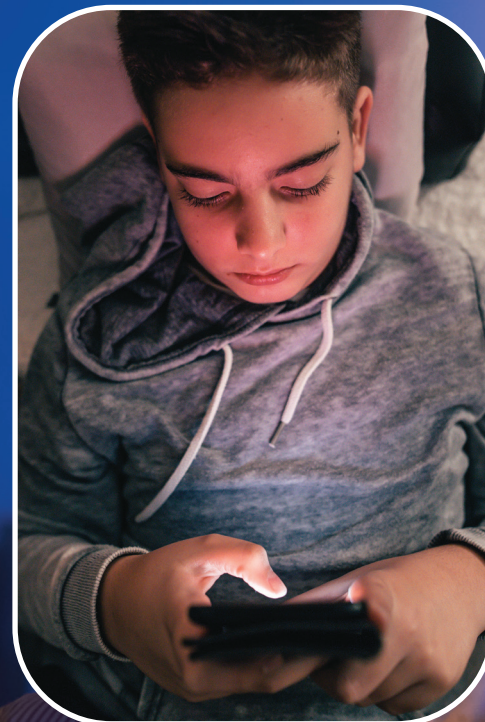
Lack of sleep can make it hard to focus, or even stay awake in class. Napping might be the first priority when they get home, which may make it tough to fall asleep later.

You can help them change the cycle. A few tips can make it easier for your teen (or anyone) to fall asleep:

- Keep the bedroom cool, dark and quiet.
- Don't do homework, play video games or use a smartphone in bed.
- Don't drink energy drinks or other caffeinated beverages after mid-afternoon.
- Limit screen time before bed.

It's also recommended that on weekends, teenagers get up within two to four hours of their usual wake time on weekdays. So yes, out of bed by lunchtime is fair.

And in a few years, they might even agree with you on that.



Younger children need their sleep, too.

Kids between the ages of 3 and 5 need a whopping 10 to 13 hours of sleep every night to stay healthy and alert. But what happens when issues like bedwetting, sleep terrors and sleepwalking get in the way?

Treatment can turn fitful nights into tranquil ones. "Seeing a child blossom once their sleep issues are resolved is a beautiful thing," says a pediatric neurologist.

She shares how to help a little one get their rest (so you can, too): [Geisinger.org/KidsAndSleep](https://www.geisinger.org/KidsAndSleep)



Don't ignore the snore.

By Paula Franken

If your bedmate is a snorer, you may find yourself lying awake and counting sheep (or fumbling for earplugs). But they're not doing it on purpose — and persistent snoring could be a sign of something else.

“Many people who snore have obstructive sleep apnea, a common medical condition that happens when the airway at the back of the throat becomes physically blocked,” explains Geisinger otolaryngologist Kevin Stavrides, MD. “Breathing can stop for up to a minute and the sleeper may gasp, snort and jolt themselves awake.”

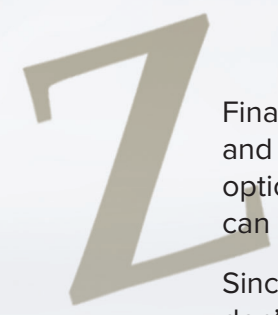
Sleep apnea has a variety of causes. Carrying a few too many pounds is the most common culprit. Heavy smoking, drinking and using sedatives can also be factors — as can sleeping on your back instead of on your side.

“Simple lifestyle changes are often all it takes to solve the problem,” says Dr. Stavrides. “But if snoring persists, your doctor will probably order a sleep study.”

If you're diagnosed with sleep apnea, you may come home with a continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) or bi-level positive airway pressure (BiPAP) machine. These devices push air through a mask you wear to bed, keeping your airway open as you sleep.

Another option: a mouthpiece that holds your jaw and tongue in place. This can help with mild sleep apnea that's triggered by anatomical features.

For others, a hypoglossal nerve stimulator may be recommended. “It's an implantable device that you turn on before bed to stimulate your neck, causing your airway to open,” explains Dr. Stavrides.



Finally, there's surgery to remove tissue and expand the airway, but it's not an option for everyone. Only a sleep surgeon can determine if it's right for you.

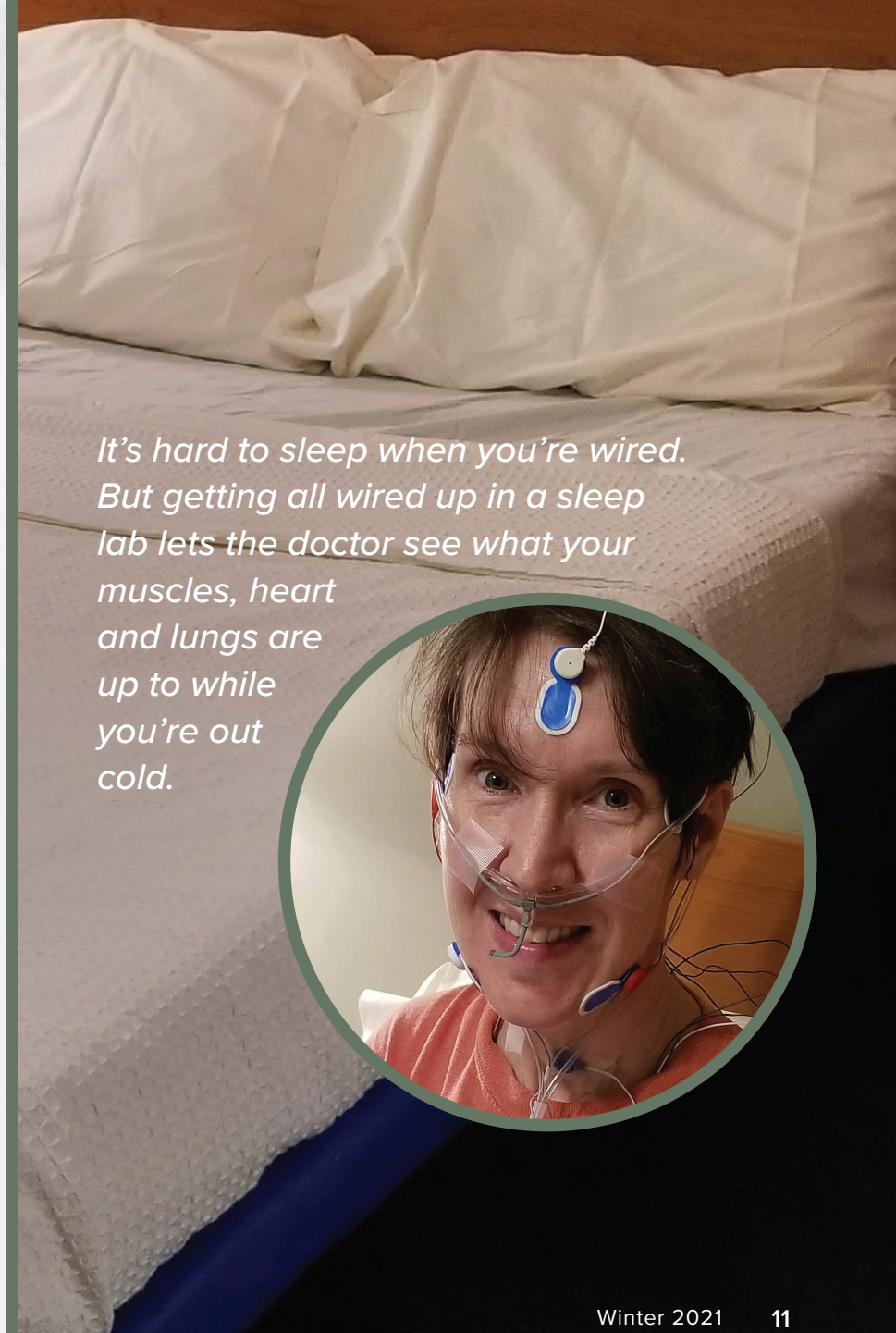
Since most people with sleep apnea don't realize they have it — after all, they're the ones snoring away — it takes a bed partner or a roommate to (gently) point it out.

And you'll be doing them a favor. Because you'll both sleep better once it's corrected.

We're pulling back the covers on our sleep lab.

Did you know Geisinger has a sleep lab, where you're diagnosed while you doze? It's probably the most relaxing medical exam you'll ever have. Well, maybe.

One of our *PA Health* staffers spent the night in one and tells you what to pack — and what to expect. [Geisinger.org/SleepStudy](https://www.geisinger.org/SleepStudy)



It's hard to sleep when you're wired. But getting all wired up in a sleep lab lets the doctor see what your muscles, heart and lungs are up to while you're out cold.





WORKING 9 TO 5... A.M.

By Beth Kaszuba

We live in a round-the-clock world. That's especially true in healthcare. Caring for people, making sure they have clean rooms and food, transporting them if needed — it all happens 24/7.

Handling long shifts and night shifts might sound like a challenge. But some doctors, nurses, medical students and support staff appreciate the different rhythms of working in the wee hours. And they have hints for those who must adjust their internal clocks, for whatever reason.

“A few things I avoid when altering my sleep schedule: **drinking caffeine**, eating a full meal before bed — I give myself at least two hours to digest — and **stress-inducing activities**. For example, I make sure I don't check work emails, and I try to put my phone on 'do not disturb.'”

– Stephanie Schultz
RFP/RFI Analyst
General Sales – Geisinger Health Plan

“Early in the morning, patients can be grumpy. And in the evening, older patients can get confused. When I'm tired, too, I try to remember that I'm not the person lying in the bed, maybe in discomfort or pain. I try to be more gentle with them, and relate. And getting enough sleep and exercise goes a long way when you work in a hospital. When I walk out of jujitsu class, I feel like a better person.”

– Vicki Devett
Care Support Services Lead, Geisinger Medical Center

Meet more of your neighbors who are burning the midnight oil while the rest of us are saving logs: [Geisinger.org/ThirdShift](https://www.geisinger.org/ThirdShift)

“Several days before beginning the next night shift, I would stay up later and later until I can make it either the whole shift time, or close to it. I **enjoyed working overnights**, because there was **less foot traffic** on the unit, **fewer new orders** being placed and I could **focus on patient care** without a lot of phone calls.”

– Carmyn Yeager, LPN
Geisinger Women's Health
Wilkes-Barre



Environmental Services technicians like Crystal Goss work day and night to keep hospitals and clinics clean and ready for patients.



Looking for better sleep?

The answer may be in your kitchen.

By Jeanne Laktash

How you slept last night sets the tone for the whole day. Good slumber? You feel like you can take on the world. Bad one? Might hit the snooze button a time or two. But there's an easy — and surprising — way to get better Zzzs.

If you're looking for more rest (and aren't we all?), try munching on these foods before bed. Each has a few secret sleep-boosting superpowers:

- **Nuts**
Melatonin and magnesium
- **Oatmeal**
Tryptophan, which your brain converts to serotonin
- **Dairy**
Calcium and tryptophan
- **Kiwi**
High levels of serotonin
- **White rice**
High glycemic index (so eat in moderation)
- **Bananas**
Magnesium and tryptophan
- **Chamomile tea**
Antioxidants like flavones and apigenin

Another way to get a better snooze?

Avoid caffeine, alcohol and rich, fatty or spicy foods for at least an hour or two before turning in for the evening.

For an evening nosh, try this dreamy, creamy banana split. The Greek yogurt, banana and nuts all promote healthy sleep.

Yogurt banana split

Ingredients:

- 1 banana
- ½ cup nonfat Greek vanilla yogurt
- ½ cup berries
- ½ teaspoon raw honey
- 1 tablespoon chopped walnuts (optional)

Directions:

Slice banana lengthwise and place in bowl. Top with yogurt and berries. Drizzle honey and sprinkle nuts (if using) over the top.



Dreaming of more exotic flavors? Try a sleep-friendly snack of za'atar and rosemary roasted almonds: [geisinger.org/almondzzz](https://www.geisinger.org/almondzzz)



It's flu season.

Sleep well knowing
you're protected.

Geisinger

Dreaming of making it through winter without getting sick?
We'll make it easy to get your flu vaccine. And at no cost to you.

Just make an appointment with your primary care provider or
walk right into any ConvenientCare location.

Last year, not many people caught the flu. Why? Because
masking, social distancing and getting flu shots works.

Let's do it again this year. Make the flu stop with you.

[Geisinger.org/FluFree](https://www.geisinger.org/FluFree)

A mask is still required when you
come to Geisinger. Thanks for
protecting our patients.
Learn more: [geisinger.org/safe](https://www.geisinger.org/safe)

Safety

