



## WOMEN'S SLEEP HEALTH

### IMPROVING SLEEP HEALTH CARE AT ALL STAGES OF LIFE

Women's unique biological changes can also impact their sleep health. The stages of a woman's life, including during pregnancy (44%) and postnatal (67%)<sup>1</sup> impacts her sleep health. Additionally, 35% of women report that they have insufficient sleep at baseline.<sup>2</sup>

**Sleepless nights in women can also be caused by unique biological conditions such as pregnancy, menopause and menstruation.** Hormonal fluctuations during the menstrual cycle can significantly impact sleep quality and duration.

Early pregnancy can bring increased sleepiness, accompanied by sleep disruptions caused by nausea, vomiting, backache and frequent urination. Followed later in pregnancy by snoring, heartburn, positional discomfort, disruptions caused by fetal movements, and restless legs syndrome. The likelihood of having insomnia increases significantly in the third trimester<sup>3</sup>.

Postpartum women sleep less in the first few weeks after delivery, including frequently waking for feedings or other childcare needs. Beyond this, women can develop postpartum insomnia due to increased stress or hormonal changes.

Hormonal changes during menopause can interfere with women's ability to fall asleep and stay asleep with hot flashes and night sweats causing women to wake during the night. This can contribute to insomnia and increased incidence of sleep apnea in post-menopausal women.

**Furthermore,** life events, hormonal changes, prescription or over the counter use of medication(s), prior sleep habits, and physical or mental conditions can disrupt a woman's sleep. Sleep disorders that particularly affect women may impact the overall health; these may include insomnia, sleep apnea, restless legs syndrome, sleep-related eating disorders and nightmare disorder.

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<sup>1</sup> Yang Y, Li W, Ma TJ, Zhang L, Hall BJ, Ungvari GS, Xiang YT. Prevalence of Poor Sleep Quality in Perinatal and Postnatal Women: A Comprehensive Meta-Analysis of Observational Studies. *Front Psychiatry*. 2020 Mar 13;11:161. doi: 10.3389/fpsy.2020.00161. PMID: 32231599; PMCID: PMC7082815.

<sup>2</sup> CDC Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Salari, N., Darvishi, N., Khaledi-Paveh, B. et al. A systematic review and meta-analysis of prevalence of insomnia in the third trimester of pregnancy. *BMC Pregnancy Childbirth* 21, 284 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12884-021-03755-z>

Other medical problems can that affect the sleep of women include arthritis, back pain, epilepsy, fibromyalgia, and Multiple sclerosis. Treating an underlying medical problem often will lead to improved sleep.

**Recognizing factors that affect women's sleep health** allows healthcare providers and women themselves to more adequately address the underlying causes of poor sleep, whether this be due to an undiagnosed sleep disorder, hormonal changes, or other factors.

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