

Help for People Who Snore and Twitch



Does your bed partner snore or toss and turn during the night? Does he or she periodically twitch like a mackerel out of water for no reason at all? Are you faced with two alternatives: Sleeping in the guest room or not sleeping at all?

Older adults—especially men—tend to develop two kinds of sleep disturbances. One is sleep apnea: Breathing stops for short periods of time and is followed by loud snoring. The other is nocturnal myoclonus, or restless legs—frequent jerking motions that sometimes awaken both the jerker and the person who shares the bed.

Sleeping with the head of the bed elevated can make breathing easier and discourage snoring. Since being overweight and drinking alcohol seem to aggravate both sleep apnea and myoclonus, losing excess pounds and avoiding alcohol can help. Sleeping pills, too, can aggravate sleep apnea, so people who have this problem should use other ways to get a good night's sleep.

You may suffer one or both of these sleep disturbances and not even know it unless your partner complains—and you should take the complaints seriously.

Sleep apnea may seem like nothing more than a nuisance, but it can be life-threatening if left untreated. So if you or your partner has this problem, see a doctor.