

A Guide to Overnight Sleep Studies

PREPARING FOR SUCCESS

What is a sleep study?

An overnight sleep study, or polysomnography (PSG), is considered the gold standard for diagnosing sleep disorders. During a PSG, you spend the night at a sleep lab where a technologist attaches multiple sensors and belts to measure the following while you sleep:

- Brain waves
- Blood oxygen levels
- Heart rate
- Chin, leg, chest, and abdominal movements

This data is monitored and analyzed to determine whether you have a sleep disorder and to develop a treatment plan.

Why are sleep studies done?

Sleep studies are conducted to identify the cause of sleep-related symptoms a person may be experiencing. Because of the comprehensive nature of a sleep study, your doctor will have ample data to diagnose a sleep condition and/or recommend treatment options. A sleep study can help diagnose any of the following:

- **Insomnia:** difficulty falling or staying asleep
- **Sleep-related breathing disorders:** abnormal breathing patterns during sleep
- **Narcolepsy or hypersomnia:** excessive daytime sleepiness despite getting the recommended amount of sleep
- **Circadian rhythm sleep-wake disorders:** disruptions in the body's internal clock that impact the timing and quality of sleep
- **Parasomnias:** unusual sleep behaviors like sleep walking or night terrors
- **Sleep-related movement disorders:** involuntary movements during sleep, like Restless Leg Syndrome (RLS), bruxism (teeth grinding), and more

How do you get a sleep study?

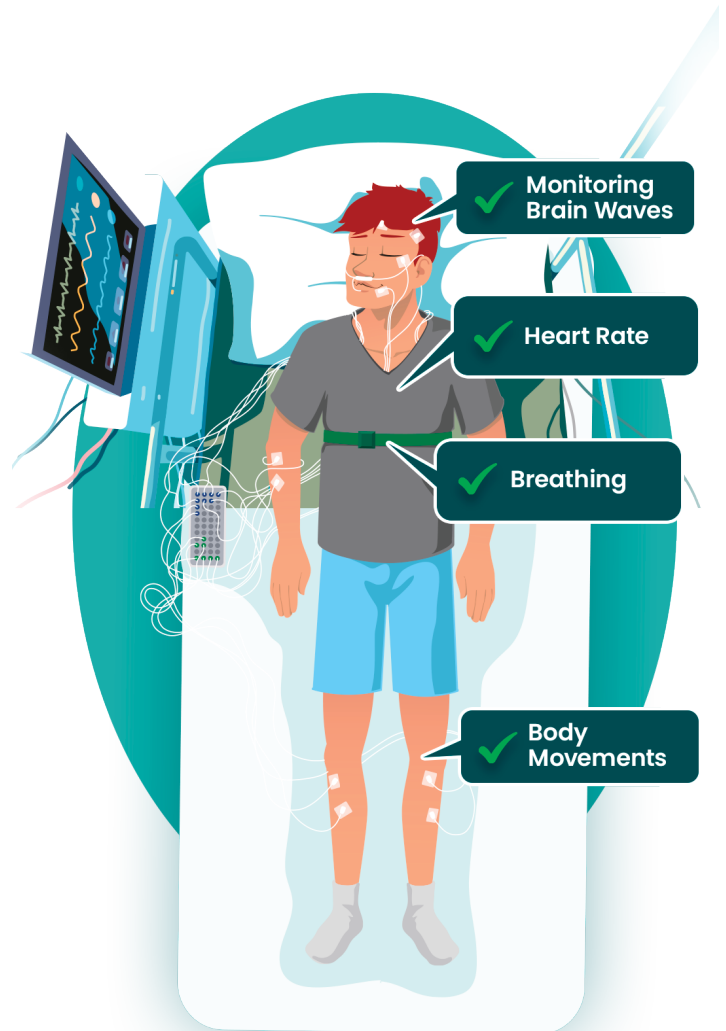
People are most often referred to a sleep study by their primary care physician, neurologist, or sleep specialist. It is important that you provide your doctor with enough information to understand the severity of your sleep problems and to decide whether or not a comprehensive sleep study is the most appropriate next step for you.

What happens during a sleep study?

It's normal to feel a bit nervous about spending the night in a sleep lab, but most facilities are thoughtfully designed to help you feel comfortable and relaxed—many even resemble nice hotel rooms instead of hospitals.

When you arrive, staff will welcome you and guide you to your private room, where you can settle in and prepare for bed just as you would at home. Before you go to sleep, a sleep technician will gently place sensors and belts on your head and body to monitor your sleep.

They will explain each step, answer any questions you may have, and make sure you are comfortable throughout the process. The image below highlights some of the main sensors and their purposes.



When the sleep technician leaves the room, you will have some time to relax before falling asleep. It may take a few minutes to adjust to the sensors, but most people stop noticing them after a few minutes. This is when a book or a relaxing meditation app might be helpful.

How to Prepare for a Sleep Study

The goal of a successful sleep study is to help you get a normal night of sleep. That means making sure you are as comfortable as possible. Here are some things you can do to help you sleep better and get the most accurate and helpful results.

Things To Do

- ✓ *Make yourself comfortable. Wear comfortable pajamas, bring your own pillow or blanket, pack your toothbrush, etc.*
- ✓ *Wash your hair with shampoo only to make it easy to attach any sensors to your head*
- ✓ *Have dinner before you arrive*
- ✓ *Bring a book you can read before you fall asleep*
- ✓ *Bring a change of clothes for the next morning*
- ✓ *Bring any medications you usually take during the time of your sleep study*
- ✓ *Pack like you would if you were staying at a hotel*

Things to Avoid

- ✗ *Caffeine*
- ✗ *Alcohol*
- ✗ *Non-prescription drugs*
- ✗ *Taking naps*
- ✗ *Anything that might prevent the sensors from attaching to your skin or taking accurate measurements: lotion, face creams, body spray, hair gel, nail polish*

Questions to Ask the Doctor or Lab Technician:

- **What time should you arrive at the sleep lab?**
- **Is it advised to continue taking your usual medications? Do you need to stop taking certain medications or supplements before your sleep study?**
- **How does the study work? What should you expect?**
- **What should you do if you need to go to the bathroom in the middle of the night?**
- **If you require music or ambient noise to fall asleep, find out what options you have during the sleep study.**
- **What should you do if you wear a hearing aid, a hairpiece, or dentures?**
- **How do you attach sensors to people with skin allergies?**
- **What happens if a sensor falls off?**
- **What will you be doing while I'm sleeping?**
- **What should I expect after the sleep study?**
- **When can I get the results of my sleep study? Will this include a diagnosis?**
- **Do you have to wake up at a certain time?**
- **What if you require an alarm to wake up?**

Preparing for your sleep study will help you get the most accurate and helpful results. Good data can help your doctor gain a better understanding of your sleep problems so that you can get a clear diagnosis and treatment plan.