

9 things patients should know about sleep trends

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People go to great lengths in pursuit of a good night's sleep.

Blackout curtains.

Meditation.

Melatonin.

Some people even tape their mouths shut before going to bed in order to force nasal breathing during the night.

But which of those approaches are actually helpful, and what is just hype?

The new AMA podcast "[Health vs. Hype](#)" is produced in partnership with iHeartRadio and tackles those very questions.

"Health vs. Hype" takes on medical misinformation, viral health trends, DIY medicine, and common health myths to help listeners understand what's real, what's risky, and what's backed by science. Host Trace Dominguez fact-checks popular health claims, explains how medical misinformation spreads, and reveals the real-world consequences of getting it wrong.

The [latest episode](#) explores sleep trends with Jose Colon, MD, the medical director of sleep medicine at [Lee Health](#) in Southwest Florida. Dr. Colon is board-certified in sleep medicine, child neurology and lifestyle medicine. In the episode, he answers a wide range of sleep-related questions, from how much sleep people of different ages should get to

whether it's better to sleep with clothes on or not.

Lee Health is part of the [AMA Health System Member Program](#), which provides enterprise solutions to equip leadership, physicians and care teams with resources to help drive the future of medicine.

Your body is doing important work while you sleep

"In sleep, we repair our body," Dr. Colon said. "Our immune system is activated. We're cleaning our brain, we're also consolidating memories during sleep."

"The brain activity does slow down," he said. "In the same way that everyone has a heart rate, well, we all also have a brain rate, and our brain does slow down and cycles every 90 minutes into a different sleep cycle."

Your deepest sleep happens during the first half of your sleep

"That deep, slow wave sleep, that's the part that actually washes away all of the fatigue and sleepiness that we have," Dr. Colon said.

Napping can be OK, but it also can cause sleep disruption

"Daytime sleep is one of the cardinal problems with regular sleep," he said. "I give an example that if someone is on their way to a restaurant and they eat a sandwich on the way to the restaurant, they're not going to be hungry when they get there. Well, just like we need to develop an appetite, we need to develop a sleep appetite."

"Naps do have a place," Dr. Colon added. Studies found that if "someone has a 20-minute nap, they have increased productivity. If you hit 40 minutes, you start to get that deep sleep and you get that sleep inertia and it's hard to wake up after the nap. In general, we try to

avoid napping unless you have something that you need your vigilance for later in that day."

You don't necessarily need extra sleep if you're sleep deprived

"There's a misconception that if I didn't sleep well one night, [I should] sleep after school or after work," Dr. Colon said. "What you really need when you're sleep deprived is just a regular, normal sleep. If [your] brain has a lot of fatigue, the next time that you go to sleep, you go into that deep sleep deeper and you're going to stay in it longer."

Everyone wakes up during the night

"Nobody sleeps through the night," Dr. Colon said. "Everyone has some degree of awakenings, and when we have these awakenings, everyone has to have an individualized routine. Some patients will go to the bathroom, others will get a swig of water. ... How you react during that awakening is [going to] influence when you get back to sleep."

"One of the things that I recommend is, when you go to bed at night, set your alarm for either what time you're going to wake up or what time you're not going to be in bed," Dr. Colon added. "Now, when you have an awakening at night—and I didn't say 'if'—don't look at the time. The only thing that happens when you look at the time is more thoughts."

These could include: "I've only slept for this long. I only have this much longer to sleep. I'm going to be up for this long. We're doing this again. What's wrong with me?"

With those questions, Dr. Colon said, "We impose self-judgment. I discourage both television and phone during these awakenings because both of them emit light, which can activate your brain. But the television serves as a surrogate marker of time."

The ideal temperature while you sleep is around 68 degrees

"That's what they found in the studies, but that has to be individualized to both the (person) and the family," he said. "My wife will not do it. We have thermostat wars at our house. She likes it at 74. I like it at 70."

The mouth-taping sleep trend is hype

"If someone's mouth breathing, it could be that they have chronic congestion, and maybe we need to get the congestion taken care of," Dr. Colon said. "Mouth taping alone as monotherapy doesn't really have any benefits that I'm aware of."

The amount of sleep you should get varies by age

"I see all ages from pediatric to geriatric," Dr. Colon said. "A 12-month-old should get 11 hours of sleep, plus one nap. A 10-year-old should be getting about 10 hours of sleep. A ninth-grader through high school should be getting about nine hours. Adults working eight-hour days should be getting about eight hours."

Once patients are in their 70s and older, they "should be getting about seven hours of sleep. All of this is plus-or-minus one hour. So in my typical adult population, I don't always emphasize eight hours. Seven hours is more than adequate for the majority of adults. Some may need that eighth hour."

There is such a thing as too much sleep

"If you take a look at people who have short sleep time, chronically sleeping five hours or less, and you take a look at people who have long sleep time—they're getting 12 hours of sleep or more—the long sleep time actually has a higher mortality [rate], and they're actually dying twice [as much as those who have] the short sleep time," Dr. Colon said. "So more sleep is not necessarily better. The quality of the sleep is more important than the



quantity."

Learn more with the AMA on [what doctors wish patients knew about getting a good night's sleep](https://patients.ama-assn.org/public-health/prevention-wellness/9-things-patients-should-know-about-sleep-trends).