



Topic

Why Sleep Problems Plague Kids & Adults With Migraine

Title & Organization

Professor of Neurology
Harvard Medical School

Speaker

Judith Owens, MD, MPH

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The longer we're awake, the stronger our sleep drive is, whereas the circadian rhythm system causes peaks and troughs of alertness throughout the day in a predictable way.
- The glymphatic system rids the brain of toxins during sleep.
- Not getting enough sleep can make pain worse not only by increasing the perception of pain, but also by lowering both the threshold for experiencing pain and pain tolerance.
- The best time to nap is between 3 to 5 p.m., and it's best to nap for 30 minutes or less.
- Adults need 8 hours of sleep a night, but children need more. Teens need between 8 and 10 hours, but many get much less.
- CBT-I (cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia) should be a first-line treatment for insomnia. Sleep medications are more of a Band-Aid for sleep issues.
- It's best not to use an electronic device in bed because the blue light disrupts sleep.
- Melatonin can help with getting to sleep but not with staying asleep. Its long-term effects are unknown, and it may cause tension-type headache. In many countries it's sold by prescription only; it is not regulated in the U.S.
- Keeping a sleep diary for 2 weeks may help your doctor determine whether poor sleep is affecting your migraine disease.
- The website sleepeducation.org provides a link under "Resources" that has a downloadable sleep diary that can be filled in.

QUOTES

"Not only is there a master circadian clock in the brain, but there are circadian clocks in every cell in the body, which means every organ system in the body. So, if those individual systems are not working in synchrony, or they're misaligned, as we call it, that has some very important repercussions on health in general."

"Migraine patients are more likely to have sleep disorders — two- to eightfold compared to patients who don't have migraines. And in particular, insomnia is at least twice as common in patients with migraine."

"A lot of people, I think, assume that they need less sleep than everybody else. And so they may be under the misapprehension that 5 or 6 hours is perfectly fine. When, in fact, for most adults, 8 hours is kind of the magic number."

"So, there are a number of things that people with insomnia do which actually make their insomnia worse. And one of them is lying in bed thinking, 'I can't sleep, I can't sleep, I can't sleep.' And so, that creates this kind of state of hyperarousal and hypervigilance, which is totally contradictory to being able to relax enough to let yourself fall asleep."

TREATMENTS CITED

Cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia (CBT-I)	Sleep hygiene (e.g., darkness, quiet, cooler temperature)
Melatonin	

PRACTICAL STEPS

- It's important to have a regular bedtime and wake time, and have a calming bedtime routine. Try to keep your weekend sleep within an hour of your regular sleep and wake times.
- Don't drink anything with caffeine or take medications containing caffeine after 4 p.m.
- Ideally keep the bedroom quiet, cool, and dark.