



## **FINDING YOUR SLEEP HEALTHCARE TEAM**

### **Where can you find sleep healthcare providers?**

Look for a healthcare center accredited by the [American Academy of Sleep Medicine \(AASM\)](#) on their website. These healthcare centers have a team of sleep professionals led by a board-certified sleep doctor. If there is no sleep center nearby, look for a sleep medicine specialist, or one of the provider types listed below. You may be able to schedule an appointment directly, or you may need a referral from your primary care provider.

### **What types of healthcare providers can diagnose, treat, and manage sleep disorders?**

Many types of healthcare providers have special expertise relevant to different sleep disorders at each stage of the journey through diagnosis, treatment, and management.

#### ***Primary care provider***

- Primary care providers are often the first provider a person sees for their sleep issues. They can assess symptoms and refer to an appropriate specialist to diagnose and treat sleep disorders and/or other health issues that could be contributing to symptoms. Primary care providers sometimes also support ongoing management of sleep disorders. For sleep apnea, they may diagnose and manage treatment without referral to a specialist. Most primary care providers do not have a lot of training in sleep medicine, so it may be helpful to see a sleep medicine specialist if sleep issues are not resolved.
- Primary care providers may be medical doctors (MD), osteopathic doctors (DO), physician assistants (PA), or nurse practitioners (NP), also called advanced registered nurse practitioners (ARNP) or advanced practice registered nurses (APRN).

#### ***Sleep medicine specialist***

- Sleep medicine specialists are doctors who have completed extra training in sleep medicine, in addition to their medical degree.
- Although all sleep specialists receive well-rounded training on the full range of sleep disorders, they may approach care differently and have expertise in

certain sleep disorders depending on their primary specialty and other training. Sleep specialists include:

- **Internal medicine physicians:** provide comprehensive care for sleep disorders in adults.
- **Pulmonologists:** typically focus on diagnosing and treating sleep disordered breathing (e.g. sleep apnea and upper airway resistance syndrome [UARS]), although some have broader expertise in the full spectrum of sleep disorders.
- **Family physicians:** provide comprehensive care for sleep disorders at all ages.
- **Psychiatrists:** specialize in evaluation and treatment of mental, emotional, and behavioral health, including insomnia, sleep-wake disorders, and parasomnias, including prescribing medications.
- **Neurologists:** specialize in disorders related to the brain and nervous system, including narcolepsy, sleep movement disorders, parasomnias, and hypersomnias.
- **Pediatricians:** specialize in sleep disorders affecting children and teens.
- **Otolaryngologists** (also called an ear, nose, and throat, or ENT doctor): specialize in head and neck surgery to treat sleep breathing disorders (e.g. snoring, UARS, and sleep apnea).
- **Anesthesiologists:** may have specialized training on managing sleep disorders around the time of surgery and related to chronic pain. If you are having a surgical procedure, be sure to mention your sleep disorder to the anesthesiologist.
- Sleep specialists may also have training in **other sub-specialties**, such as critical care, cardiology, geriatric medicine, and others.

### ***Behavioral sleep medicine specialist***

- Behavioral sleep medicine specialists are healthcare providers who have done extra training in behavioral sleep medicine, including medical doctors, psychologists, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and clinical social workers.
- They help people improve sleep or manage sleep disorders using therapies that address thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, including cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia (CBTi), and strategies for adjusting to CPAP for sleep apnea

and living well with sleep-wake disorders, parasomnias (e.g. nightmares), and hypersomnias (e.g. narcolepsy).

- Find a behavioral sleep medicine specialist on the [Society for Behavioral Sleep Medicine website](#).

### **Psychologist**

- Psychologists help people improve sleep or manage sleep disorders using therapies that address thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. A psychologist is usually not licensed to prescribe medications, but may work with another physician who can prescribe if needed.

### **Nurse practitioner (NP, ARNP, or APRN) or physician assistant (PA)**

- NPs and PAs work with the healthcare team in primary care or in sleep centers to diagnose, treat, and manage sleep disorders.

### **Dentist**

- Dentists who specialize in sleep dentistry provide oral appliance therapy for sleep breathing disorders (e.g., snoring, UARS, and sleep apnea).

### **Oral and maxillofacial surgeon**

- Oral and maxillofacial surgeons specialize in surgery to treat sleep breathing disorders, including snoring, UARS, and sleep apnea.

### **Sleep technologists and respiratory therapists**

- Sleep technologists and respiratory therapists are involved in testing and follow-up care for sleep disorders, including running and analyzing sleep tests and supporting CPAP treatment.

### **Sleep coach or sleep consultant**

- Sleep coaches provide advice and guidance on improving sleep. They are not required to have any standard training or healthcare qualifications, so it is important to carefully consider their experience and reputation if choosing to work with a sleep coach. For ongoing sleep issues, it is best to see a qualified healthcare provider.