

# Sleep Well

**Be well, Do well, Live well**  
**#selfloveselfcarefirst**



## SUMMER 2020

### Greetings!

We inhabit an entirely different world from the one we all lived in merely a few months ago. We are now in the midst of a global pandemic.

Our practice was mandated to close by the NJ Governor in mid March, 2020, in efforts to help mitigate the spread of the Corona virus, and to conserve the PPE available at that time for our front line workers.

Once we were given the green light to reopen, we got busy "Rethinking" the practice of Dental Sleep Medicine. How could we safely practice in the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Today, we are very excited to invite you to see all the safety changes we have made at NJDSMC, and are pleased to announce that we have been open since June 29, 2020!**



## FAQ about COVID-19 and Your Sleep

### **Why are so many people having trouble sleeping while sheltering in place?**

Elevated stress and an overload of information can keep the mind racing and elevate the body's arousal system response, triggering insomnia.

People are spending every waking moment getting one last look at their screens (news updates, COVID-19 education, social connections). The blue light from these screens tells the brain to stop producing the sleep hormone melatonin, which can lead to trouble falling asleep.

Also, loss of daytime structure can upset nighttime sleep schedules. Inconsistent bedtimes and wake times can shift the pressure, or urge, to sleep, making ability to fall asleep less predictable.

Finally, depressed mood, more downtime and low energy can increase long napping, making it harder to fall asleep at night.

### **Can sleep help improve my mood and productivity during the COVID-19 pandemic?**

It's not easy to function at our best without easy access to our usual coping skills (e.g., social support, exercise, etc.) while sheltering in place. Adequate sleep can maximize your potential for having better days under these circumstances. Optimal sleep helps regulate mood, improve brain function, and increase energy and overall productivity during the day.

### **What can help me sleep better during the coronavirus pandemic?**

**Sleep is crucial at this time.**

**Here's how changing habits can help improve your sleep:**

**Create a sleep schedule.** Figure out your sleep need (experiment with different amounts), then prioritize that amount of sleep each night. While six or nine hours can be appropriate for some adults, most need seven to eight hours. We are not obliged to late night social activities, so getting to bed "on time" is more realistic right now — take advantage of that.

**Limit screen time at night.** Turn off your devices one hour before bedtime. Leave your cell phone charging in the kitchen so you are not tempted to look at COVID-19 updates during the night.

**Find time for you.** Take the hour before bedtime as "me time" with no electronic engagement. Minimize conversations and calls during that hour. That's not easy, especially if you have young children at home, but it's important. We all need at least one hour alone per day. Take a hot bath/shower, play soothing music, try a meditation app and read a book or magazine.

**Minimize naps.** Daytime sleep should be less than 30 minutes and before 2 p.m. If you have any trouble falling asleep, avoid napping.

**Try breathing exercises.** Use ten slow deep breaths to fall asleep and return to sleep. It should be a slow inhale through your nose for 3 to 4 seconds and a slow exhale through your mouth for 3 to 4 seconds.

**Enhance your sleep environment.** Make sure your bedroom environment is conducive to sleep. Keep the room temperature cool, try an eye mask or blackout shades, and use a white noise machine to block extraneous noise from the street or the hallway.

**Gain control over stress.** Many folks have less access to their usual coping strategies such as time with friends and going to the gym. Try new activities and hobbies — painting, writing, photography, indoor exercise videos, etc. Find ways to stay connected with friends and family through technology. Consider therapy if the stress feels unmanageable.

**Structure your daytime schedule.** Commit to daily activities (e.g., exercise, meals, socializing) at certain times to build structure to your days. This will support a regular bedtime and wake

time. Set cell phone reminders to anchor your schedule, and as a reminder to turn off screens an hour before bedtime.

Source- Lisa Medalie, PsyD, DBSM, a behavioral sleep medicine specialist at the University of Chicago Medicine.



### Sleep Tip

Practice gratitude as an end of the day practice, especially if you find it hard to "shut off" because your mind races at that time.

Pick your top 3 moments/people/experience/achievement/opportunity you are most grateful for. Journal about how they added to your day.

Express your gratitude out loud or on paper.

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**“Even a soul submerged in sleep is hard at work and helps make something of the world.”  
— Heraclitus**

**DR. SUNITA MERRIMAN**



*Never before has our health had such center stage in our lives. Our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing are in turmoil in this pandemic. Taking care of ourselves is critically essential for our survival.*

Dr. Merriman is someone who deeply understands the importance of balancing these states of being, and who has made it her mission to provide care to others so that they might achieve such balance.

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**DOCTOR - DIPLOMATE - AUTHOR - SPEAKER**

**Dr. Sunita Merriman**

**Founder, New Jersey Dental Sleep Medicine Center**

As a Diplomate of both, the American Board of Dental Sleep Medicine, and the American Board of Craniofacial Dental Sleep Medicine, Dr. Merriman is qualified to screen for OSA, snoring and sleep-related bruxism, and treat, educate, and provide long-term management of patients who are diagnosed by a physician, with either OSA, snoring or sleep-related bruxism.

**NJDSMC is a Medicare DME-approved Supplier for Oral Appliance Therapy and works with a patient's medical insurance for billing of services provided for Obstructive Sleep Apnea and Snoring.**

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