



## Why Do People Talk in Their Sleep?

Are you concerned that you talk in your sleep? Perhaps someone told you that you mumbled some incomprehensible gibberish during the night? Or, that you burst out laughing; engaged in a several minute-long monologue or even screamed out loud! Yikes! Maybe you have a child who frequently talks while sleeping?

Is talking in your sleep dangerous or bad? Or, is it normal, nothing to worry about and something most of us do? This article looks at the various reasons people talk in their sleep, as well as offers suggestions to relieve [Sleep Talking](#) embarrassment and/or other worries.

### What Actually is Sleep Talking?

According to the [National Sleep Foundation](#), Sleep Talking is a sleep disorder classified as a [parasomnia](#) and is defined as one talking during sleep without his/her awareness. Talking in your sleep can occur at any point during the night. In lighter sleep stages, your sleep chatter may be clearer, more sensible and lengthy, while in deep sleep, talking may be a cry out, a moan or gibberish.

Except for getting feedback from a bed partner or roommate, many of us have no clue that we may occasionally or frequently talk in our sleep.

### Who Talks in Their Sleep?

Sleep Talking seems to run in families. Consequently, there are those of us who are more likely predisposed to chat while asleep than others. Despite the possible [genetic connection](#), the vast majority of people at some point in their lives have talked while getting their ZZZ's.

Generally speaking, about half of all [children](#) between three and ten years old talk or make sounds in their sleep several nights a week. Among the sleep talking kids, there seems to be no gender-related prevalence. Both boys and girls talk while sleeping. As the children get older, they usually talk far less in their sleep.

Among adults who engage in Sleep Talking, the majority are men. And, while half of all children talk in their sleep, only about [5% of adults sleep talk](#) regularly. [Two-thirds of all adults](#) though say something while sleeping several times a year.

### **Does Talking in Your Sleep Mean You're Having a Nightmare?**

It very well could be that while having a bad dream, a child or adult might talk or cry out in their sleep. However, nightmares aren't the only instance when this happens. According to the [Alaska Sleep Clinic](#), other parasomnias that may co-exist with Sleep Talking include:

- [Sleep Terrors](#) - Appear similar to a nightmare but occur before the REM dream state and involve extremely intense feelings of fear typically not remembered upon waking. (We usually remember a bad dream.)
- [Sleep Walking](#) - While walking in your sleep, someone might ask you a question to which you may respond.
- [Nocturnal Sleep-Related Eating Disorder](#) - Walking, binge eating and talking may all occur congruently while you're sound asleep.
- [Confusional Arousals](#) - You wake up, or at least seem to be awake, yet your behavior is strange and may involve Sleep Talking.
- [Obstructive Sleep Apnea Syndrome](#) - Snoring and stopped breathing while sleeping could be a symptom of Sleep Talking.
- [REM Sleep Behavior Disorder](#) - People with RBD yell, shout and act out their dreams, often violently.
- [Psychiatric Disorders](#) - In rare cases, adult-onset of frequent Sleep Talking is associated with mental illness or [nocturnal seizures](#) .

### **What Other Factors May Induce Sleep Talking?**

For the children and adults who experience frequent Sleep Talking, as well as for the rest of us who occasionally talk in our sleep, the following [factors can contribute to our nighttime utterances](#):

- Chronic fatigue
- Sleep deprivation
- Inconsistent bedtimes
- Stress
- Depression
- Fever
- Certain medications
- Substance abuse
- Caffeine
- Alcohol

Consistent sleep and wellness rituals such as having a regular wake-up/bedtime schedule and getting sufficient sleep seem to quiet sleep chatter.

### **Is Sleep Talking Dangerous?**

Sleep Talking is harmless for the most part. There are some circumstances however when it can become detrimental to the person talking in their sleep. Moreover, parents and bed partners who witness their loved one's sleep talking may suffer as well from interrupted sleep and general concern.

The first negative consideration is that when you're told you've said something in your sleep, it can feel embarrassing and down-right nerve racking. According to a recent article in the [Washington Post](#), some people curse and say nasty things in their sleep. Such concern, shame or guilt can lead to [insomnia](#) and other challenges.

While there is the consolation that the [things we say while sleeping usually cannot incriminate](#) us in court, that doesn't fully negate the "What did I say in my sleep?" worry-factor.

Another consideration is that nighttime sleep chatter or sounds can cause sleep disturbance for the bed partner or roommate. In particular, if someone speaks

loudly or yells out in their sleep, it can be very jarring and make falling back to sleep a challenge for the other person.

### **What Can You Do to Stop Talking in Your Sleep?**

Frequently no treatment for talking in your sleep is necessary since it happens infrequently and is short-term. However, if your Sleep Talking persists and becomes embarrassing for you or problematic for anyone around you, [consider the following measures](#):

- Restrict your alcohol, caffeine and nicotine consumption
- Establish and follow consistent bed and wake-up times
- Get 7-9 hours of restorative sleep nightly
- Engage in stress reduction techniques
- Enter treatment for substance abuse
- Talk to your pharmacist about the side effects for all the medications you are taking
- Speak to a mental health specialist for anxiety or depression
- Encourage your partner to wear ear plugs or use white noise to drown out any nighttime chatter

### **Should You See a Doctor if You Talk in Your Sleep?**

Not usually, but it depends. Should your Sleep Talking be accompanied by stressful nighttime events including thrashing body movements, physical fear, sweating, or anything else that is long-lasting and beyond a little embarrassment, please don't hesitate to see a physician or sleep specialist immediately. There may be an underlying condition(s) related to this parasomnia that requires diagnosing and professional care.

### **The Bottom Line**

Of the variety of parasomnias out there, Sleep Talking has perhaps the least egregious impact on our sleep and health. Why it happens though is not entirely understood. It occurs most frequently in children and men and there appears to be a family connection.

For the almost 50% of children and 5% of adults who talk in their sleep regularly, there can be physical and emotional challenges. In those instances, seeking out the care of a physician or sleep specialist is warranted.

For the rest of us who engage in sporadic Sleep Talking, relax. The majority of adults talk in their sleep here and there and still wake up feeling refreshed. If by chance your bed partner or roommate complain about your occasional nighttime banter, a pair of ear plugs or a white noise device can assist in muffling the disturbing sleep sounds.

If you're still unhappy about talking in your sleep, healthy sleep habit maintenance, including getting sufficient hours of sleep, may just lull you to quieter nights of sleep.