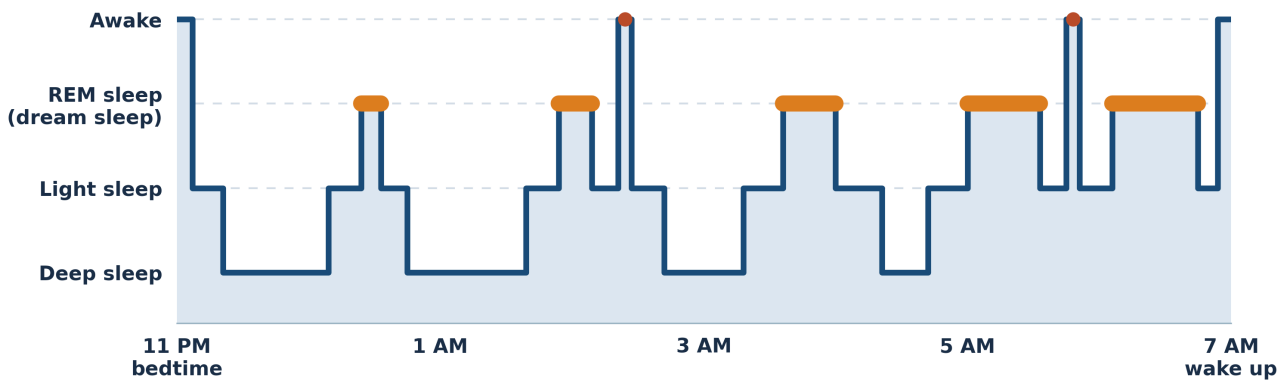
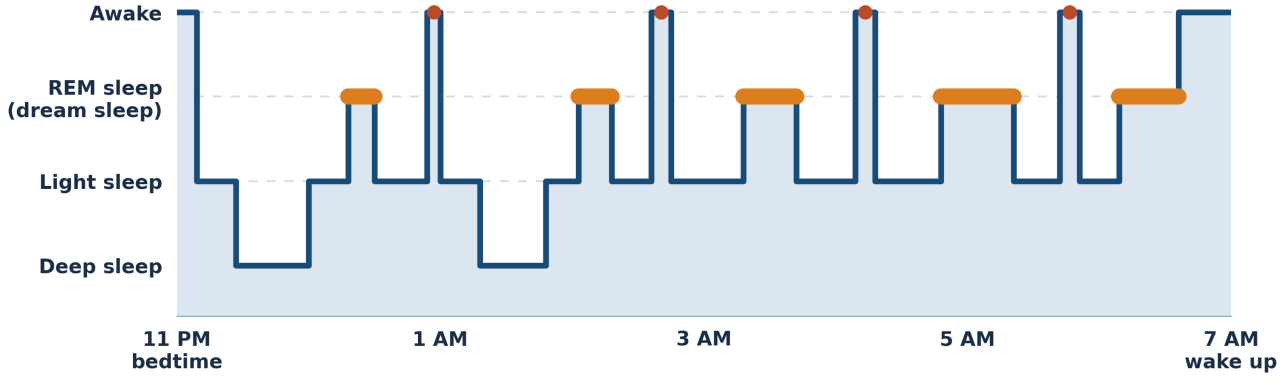
How Sleep Changes Through the Night

A younger adult (under 65)



A younger adult's night (under 65): long stretches of deep sleep early on, short dream periods that grow longer, and only one or two brief wake-ups.

An older adult (65 and up)



An older adult's night (a senior, 65 and up): deep sleep is shorter, light sleep takes up more of the night, and wake-ups happen more often. **These changes are a normal part of aging** — they do not mean sleep is "broken."

One full cycle lasts about 90 minutes. Most people have 4 to 5 cycles in a night.

- **Deep sleep comes early**
  Most deep sleep happens in the first half of the night.

- **Dream sleep comes later**
  REM periods are short at first. They get longer toward morning — that is why you often wake from a dream.

The four stages

Awake

Brief moments, all night

Short wake-ups during the night are normal. Most last only a minute or two. You often do not remember them in the morning. These brief wake-ups let you shift position and check that you are safe. They are a healthy part of sleep, not a sign that sleep is broken.

Light sleep

About half the night

The first part of sleep. Your breathing and heart rate slow down. You can wake up easily from light sleep. In light sleep, your muscles relax and your body slows down, getting ready for deeper sleep. Your brain also begins to sort the day and store memories.

Deep sleep

About 1 to 2 hours a night

The deepest sleep. It is hard to wake up. This is when your body does most of its repair work. In deep sleep, your body releases most of its growth hormone. Growth hormone helps build and repair muscles, bones, and tissues. Deep sleep also restores your energy, and helps your immune system stay strong. Deep sleep also helps clear waste from the brain. You need it to feel rested.

REM sleep

About 1 to 2 hours a night

REM means “rapid eye movement.” Your eyes move fast under your eyelids. Your brain is active, and most dreams happen in REM sleep. Your muscles stay very relaxed. Dream sleep helps your brain store memories, learn new skills, and work through emotions. It is important for your mood and for thinking clearly the next day.