

What would humans do if we never had to sleep again?

If there was a drug that meant you never had to sleep again, would you take it? Would those who didn't need to sleep have special advantages over those who did?

I talked to [James Hughes](#) and [Nancy Kress](#). Hughes is the executive director of the [Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technologies](#). Kress is a science fiction author, who wrote the trilogy [Beggars in Spain](#) all about people who are genetically engineered to be incapable of sleeping.

Both Hughes and Kress would love forgo sleep themselves, but they're also both realistic about how hard that is. Sleep, it turns out, is a really important thing. More and more research suggests that sleep is not simply wasted time, but rather a crucial period for our brains to cleanse themselves, for important hormones to be released, and for our bodies to recover from the day. So getting rid of it entirely is probably out of the question, for now.

Of course, there are lots of drugs that attempt to delay sleep. Some were developed to help those with conditions like narcolepsy. Some are being [supported heavily by the military](#), which has a keen interest in keeping soldiers awake for longer. Modafinil is the most well known of these, and many of the studies done on the drug have been in military settings—[fighter pilots](#), [helicopter pilots](#), and so on. But it's not just for soldiers. It's also [the drug of choice for investment bankers](#), and it's [becoming more popular among students](#).

The ethics of cognitive enhancement, or “smart drugs,” is a [complicated field](#) with a lot of [competing opinions](#). But these are questions we'll have to answer sooner than later.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [Never Sleep Again, Using This Drug](#)