

TIPS FOR SLEEP AS YOU AGE

Quick Facts:

Adults require the same amount of sleep from the age of 20 into later adulthood. The hours of sleep per night changes by individual, but many older adults get less sleep than they need. Age-related changes in sleep patterns, illnesses, mental health, and medications are among the factors that can worsen sleep. Good sleep is important to health and emotional well-being at any age, but is vital for older adults because it can improve memory, repair cell damage and help prevent disease.

KEY POINTS:

- **Older adults need as much sleep as younger adults**
- **Changes in sleep patterns are a part of normal aging**
- **Common factors linked to poor sleep in older adults include medical and mental health conditions, physical pain, medications, anxiety and depression**
- **Managing the physical and emotional causes of poor sleep and using good sleep habits can improve sleep in older adults**
- **It is important for older adults to talk with healthcare providers about sleep problems, so a personalized plan can be put into place to manage sleep problems**



How Can I Learn More?

- Talk to your board-certified sleep medicine physician.
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Am I At Risk:

Poor sleep due to medical conditions and medications is common in older adults. Worry and stress can make it difficult to get good sleep. Lack of exercise may increase daytime sleepiness and make it difficult to fall asleep. Poor sleep habits such as an irregular bedtime, alcohol or caffeine before bedtime, and falling asleep in front of the TV can make sleep problems worse.

GENERAL OVERVIEW:

Studies on the sleep habits of older adults show an increase in the time it takes to fall asleep, a decline in deep sleep, and an increase in night waking with age. The most common causes of sleep problems in older

adults are a poor sleep environment and daytime habits. Understanding age-related sleep changes and discussing underlying sleep problems with a doctor can lead to positive changes in daytime and sleep habits.

GENERAL SLEEP TIPS FOR OLDER ADULTS:

Identify and treat underlying problems

- Take a pain reliever or talk to your doctor about alternative treatments for pain so that nighttime discomfort does not prevent you from falling asleep.
- Seek help to take care of medical and emotional problems.
- Reviews all medications and treatments that may increase sleep problems with your doctor.

Improve habits

- Maintain regular physical activity to help promote healthy sleep and lessen fatigue.
- Maximize sunlight during the day and minimize light exposure at night. This includes turning off the TV and computer at least one hour before bed.
- Keep your bedroom quiet, dark, and cool.
- Use your bedroom only for sleep and sex; avoid non-sleep activities when in bed.
- Maintain a consistent sleep-wake schedule.
- Limit intake of caffeine, alcohol and nicotine that interfere with sleep.
- Reduce mental stress.



Next Steps:

- It is important to talk with your doctor about your sleep concerns.
- Get tested for sleep disorders such as sleep apnea if recommended.
- Review all your treatments and medications with healthcare providers and talk about how to manage sleep-related side effects.



Questions For Your Physician

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.



Sample Questions:

Does my age affect my sleep?

Why do I wake up so early in the morning?
