



Resident Wellness Newsletter

Common Causes of Sleep Disorders

As we age, we often experience normal changes in our sleeping patterns, but sleep is just as important to your physical and emotional health as it was when you were younger. A good night's sleep helps improve concentration and memory formation, allows your body to repair any cell damage that occurred during the day and refreshes your immune system. Older adults who don't sleep well are more likely to suffer from depression, attention and memory problems, excessive daytime sleepiness and experience more nighttime falls. Insufficient sleep can also lead to serious health problems.

Older adults need about the same amount of sleep as all adults—7 to 9 hours each night. However, how you feel in the morning is more important than a specific number of hours. Frequently waking up not feeling rested or feeling tired during the day are the best indications that you're not getting enough sleep. Common causes of insomnia and sleep problems in older adults include:

- Poor sleep habits and sleep environment. These include irregular sleep hours, consumption of alcohol before bedtime, and falling asleep with the TV on. Make sure your room is comfortable, dark and quiet, and your bedtime rituals conducive to sleep.
- Pain or medical conditions. Health conditions such as a frequent need to urinate, pain, arthritis, asthma, diabetes, osteoporosis, nighttime heartburn, and Alzheimer's disease can interfere with sleep. Talk to your doctor to address any

medical issues.

- Medications. Older adults tend to take more medications than younger people and the combination of drugs, as well as their side-effects, can impair sleep. Your doctor may be able to make changes to your medications to improve sleep.
- Lack of exercise. If you are too sedentary, you may never feel sleepy or feel sleepy all the time. Regular aerobic exercise during the day can promote good sleep.
- Stress. Significant life changes like retirement, the death of a loved one, or moving from a family home can cause stress.
- Lack of social engagement. Social activities, family, and work can keep your activity level up and prepare your body for a good night's sleep.
- Sleep disorders. Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS) and sleep-disordered breathing—such as snoring and sleep apnea—occur more frequently in older adults.
- Lack of sunlight. Bright sunlight helps regulate melatonin and your sleep-wake cycles. Try to get at least two hours of sunlight a day. Keep shades open during the day or use a light therapy box.



Read more: <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/sleep/how-to-sleep-well-as-you-age.htm>

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