

TIPS FOR BETTER SLEEP IN OLDER ADULTS

Quick Facts:

Most people have difficulty sleeping at some point in their lives. Overall health, medications, lifestyle choices, sleep habits, stress and certain sleep disorders can affect sleep.

KEY POINTS:

- **Sleep is restorative to the body and brain**
- **Sleep may help improve immune function in the body**
- **Obtaining an adequate amount of sleep helps you function well during the day**
- **Good sleep habits can help promote healthy sleep/wake patterns**
- **Keep a consistent sleep schedule. Get up at the same time every day.**



How Can I Learn More?

- Talk to your board-certified sleep medicine physician.
- Visit www.sleepeducation.org

Am I At Risk?

Try to sleep at least 7 hours or more per night on a consistent basis. If you are still having difficulty sleeping, schedule an appointment with your doctor to discuss potential underlying sleep problems.

- **Follow good sleep habits**
- **Stay physically active**
- **Keep a regular schedule if possible**
- **Avoid spending too little or too much time in bed**
- **Try to make sure medical conditions and depression/anxiety are adequately treated**

Lack of sleep may lead to accidents and impair performance. Frequent or persistent problems can lead to mood disorders and affect health.

GENERAL OVERVIEW:

Sleep is part of the 24-hour-cycle of the body that is closely regulated by the brain. Sleep is comprised of REM (rapid eye movement) and non-REM sleep. During REM sleep the body does not move, but the brain is active. In REM sleep, dreams are more vivid and some body functions speed up.

Soon after we fall asleep, our bodies typically start in non-REM sleep. Towards the latter half of the night, REM sleep periods become progressively longer. Most people need at least seven hours of sleep to feel refreshed and function well during the day.

TIPS:

- Go to bed and get up at the same time every day, including weekends.
- If you have difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep, do not spend excessive amounts of time awake in bed.
- Establish regular daytime routines and try and eat meals at the same time every day.
- Find time to relax, especially if you feel stressed. Keeping a diary during the day to record tasks to do and/or stressful events may help.
- Use the bedroom only for sleeping and intimate relations.
- Try to perform quiet and relaxing activities one to two hours prior to your bedtime. It may be helpful to develop a bedtime ritual.
- Avoid falling asleep outside of the bedroom, such as in front of the TV.
- Do not go to bed until you feel drowsy. Think of pleasant and relaxing images in bed
- Ensure the bedroom is dark, quiet and the temperature is comfortable for sleeping.
- Wear comfortable pajamas or clothes for sleeping.
- Do not drink caffeinated beverages within 5-6 hours of your bedtime. Avoid napping during the day. If you do, limit naps to no more than 30 minutes, at least six to eight hours prior to bedtime.
- Try to exercise for 30 minutes a day. Try not to exercise four to six hours before bedtime.
- Avoid taking a hot bath two to three hours before bedtime.
- Avoid drinking liquids and eating a heavy meal two to three hours prior to bedtime. A light snack at bedtime may be helpful.

➔ Next Steps:

- Contact your doctor if you have had difficulties falling or staying asleep for over a month. You may want to seek medical attention sooner if you have problems functioning during the day or feel sleepy when you need to be alert such as driving. Tell your doctor if you have difficulty staying alert during the day and have been told that you snore or have irregular breathing when you sleep.



Questions For Your Physician

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



Sample Questions:

How many hours of sleep do I need a night?
Why do I wake up so early in the morning?
