

MANAGING SLEEP IN OLDER ADULTS

INFORMATION FOR OLDER ADULTS, FAMILIES,
AND CAREGIVERS



READ THIS PAMPHLET TO LEARN:

- What Causes Sleeping Problems in Older Adults.
- Types of Sleeping Problems and Disorders.
- How you can Help Manage Sleeping Problems.



Sinai Health System

HEALTHY AGEING AND GERIATRICS

SLEEPING **AS WE AGE**

As we get older, we may find it harder to fall and stay asleep. Many older adults may feel less satisfied with the sleep they are getting and feel more tired during the day. The lack of quality sleep can affect your energy, emotions, and overall health.

There are steps you can take to help you get the rest you need, and feel less tired during the day.

Read this pamphlet to see what you can do to help better manage your sleeping patterns.

ARE YOU GETTING **ENOUGH SLEEP?**

Sleeping patterns are different for each person. Although it is recommended that adults get 7 - 9 hours of sleep a night, there is no “right amount” of sleep. As we get older, our sleeping needs change. You may need to sleep less and feel just as rested.

You can tell if you are experiencing sleep problems if:

- You have trouble falling asleep at night
- You have trouble falling back asleep if you have woken up during the night
- You wake up constantly during the night
- Your sleep feels light
- You feel tired during the day
- You have difficulty concentrating throughout the day
- You have low energy and do not feel rested

If you feel this regularly and are not getting the rest you need, you may have a sleeping problem.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF SLEEPING PROBLEMS?

Some sleeping problems are temporary and may be caused by stress or other factors.

If you notice your sleep problems are regularly occurring and interfere with your everyday life, you may have a sleeping disorder.

COMMON REASONS FOR SLEEPING PROBLEMS

Being less active during the day can throw off your sleep-wake schedule, as you will be less tired and therefore less sleepy at night.

- Drinking caffeinated beverages including coffee, tea, or soft drinks, which can keep you up at night.
- Some medications might keep you from falling or staying asleep. Talk to your health care providers to see if your medications may be interacting with your sleep schedule.
- Irregular sleeping patterns including napping during the day may cause sleeping problems because you are less tired at night.
- Psychological problems or psychiatric disorders may cause stress and sleep problems.
- Other health conditions may contribute to waking up during the night. For example, congestive heart failure, obstructive sleep apnea, and urinary incontinence.

COMMON SLEEPING DISORDERS

Insomnia is the inability to sleep or feel rested and refreshed. Insomnia may be chronic (lasting over a month) or acute (lasting a few days or weeks). It can be caused by stress, anxiety, depression or other underlying health conditions.

You should speak to your health care provider about insomnia symptoms to assess how serious a problem is it and how you can treat it.

Sleep Apnea is often associated with high blood pressure and other health problems. With sleep apnea, breathing stops - sometimes for as long as 10-60 seconds and the amount of oxygen in the blood drops. This will occur repeatedly, causing multiple sleep disruptions throughout the night. This can lead to you feeling sleepless and less rested throughout the day.

Sleep Apnea puts you at risk for cardiovascular disease, headaches, memory loss and depression. If you have the symptoms of sleep apnea, speak to your health care professional immediately for treatment.

IDENTIFY UNDERLYING PROBLEMS:

Many cases of sleeping problems and disorders are caused by underlying but treatable causes. Ask yourself these questions if you are experiencing regular sleeping disruptions and bring your answers to your health care provider:

- Are you under a lot of stress?
- Are you depressed?
- Do you feel anxious or worried?
- Are you taking any medications that may disrupt your sleep?
- Do you have any health problems interfering with sleep?

HOW TO SLEEP WELL AS YOU AGE

As we get older, we may find it harder to fall and stay asleep. Many older adults may feel less satisfied with the sleep they are getting and feel more tired during the day. The lack of quality sleep can affect your energy, emotions, and overall health.

DURING THE DAY



- Avoid large meals and drinking fluids a few hours before bedtime.
- Limit or eliminate alcohol, caffeine, and nicotine.
- Exercise regularly but not within 2 hours of your bedtime.
- Get adequate exposure to bright light during the day.
- Avoid napping.
- Get out of bed at the same time each morning.

HOURS OF SLEEP



There is no “right amount” of sleep. As we get older, our sleeping needs change.

You may need to sleep less and feel just as rested.

DURING THE NIGHT



- Make sure your bedroom is quiet, dark, and cool to keep comfortable throughout the night.
- If it helps, use soothing noise (e.g. a fan, other appliance, “white noise” machine).
- Remove electronics from the room.
- Develop a sleep ritual (same routine each night before going to bed).
- If possible, avoid using sleeping aids and pills to help you sleep as many of these can increase your risk of falls.

SLEEPING AIDS

FOR OLDER ADULTS

Sleeping Pills:

It is always best to manage your sleep with changes in your daily activities before using sleeping aids. Although sleeping aids may help regulate your sleeping schedule, they can also have dangerous side effects and are not meant for long-term use.

Always speak with your health care provider before taking any type of sleeping aid, including over-the-counter options.

Melatonin:

Melatonin is a hormone that helps control your sleep and wake cycles. Melatonin can be found in some foods (meats, grains, fruits, and vegetables) or supplements. Your health care provider may recommend adding melatonin to your diet to treat some sleeping problems. Talk to your health care provider to learn the right dosage amount and find out if melatonin is right for you.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

CANADIAN SLEEP SOCIETY

The Canadian Sleep Society (CSS) provides resources and information on how to improve your sleeping patterns. These resources are available in both English and French. CSS also offers a sleep clinic map to locate the nearest clinic in your area.



www.css-scs.ca

JOHNS HOPKINS MEDICINE - HEALTHY AGEING

Johns Hopkins Healthy Aging section provides resources on insomnia and other sleep-related disorders. This online resources offers information on diagnosis and treatment options, as well as prevention strategies for better sleep as you age.



www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/healthy_aging

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Modified: 08/2016

Visit www.sinaigeriatrics.ca/healtheducation for additional resources for older adults, families and caregivers.