



**Sinai
Health**

Healthy Ageing
and Geriatrics

Healthy Ageing 101: How Older Adults Can Get A More Perfect Night's Sleep

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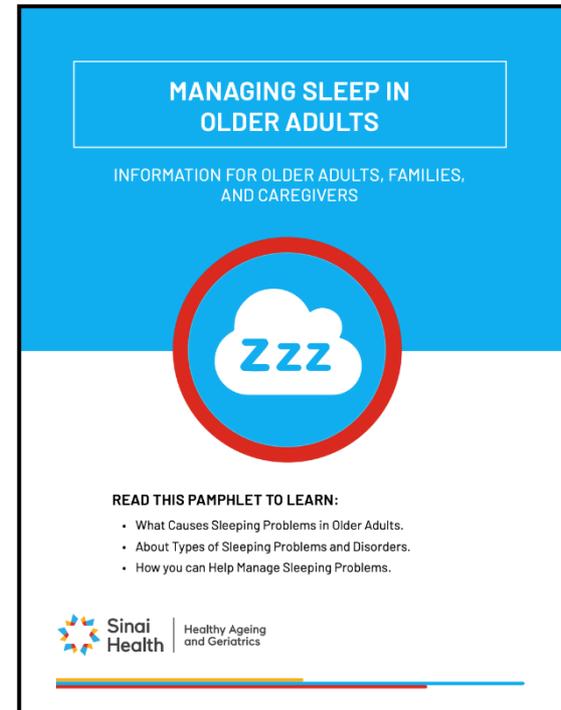
Learning Objectives



- What causes sleeping problems in older adults
- Types of common sleeping problems and disorders
- How you can better manage common sleeping problems to get a better night's sleep

Sleep Changes As We Age

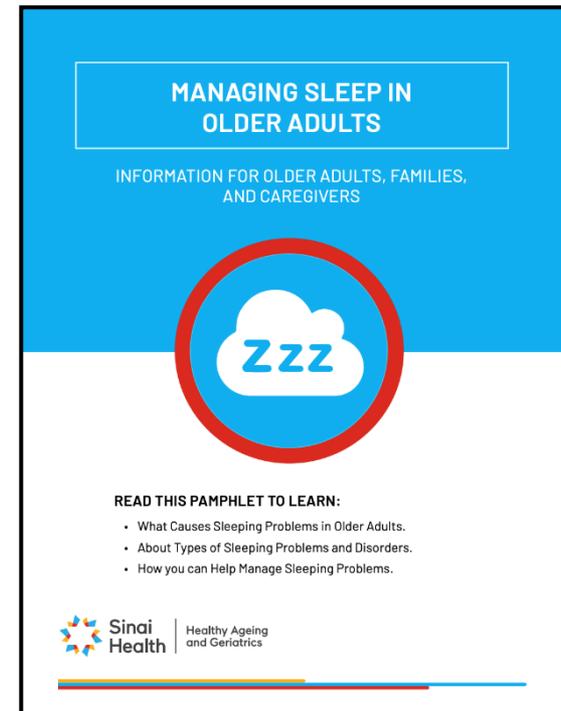
- Many older adults may feel less satisfied with the sleep they are getting as they age and feel more tired during the day.
- A lack of quality sleep can affect your energy, emotions, and overall health.



Find more information about sleep in our free resource “Managing Sleep in Older Adults” on our website <https://sinaigeriatrics.ca/patient-resources/managing-sleep-in-older-adults/>

Common Sleep Changes As We Age

- decreased total nocturnal sleep time
- delayed sleep initiation
- advanced circadian rhythm
- reduced slow-wave sleep (stages 3 and 4)
- reduced REM sleep
- reduced threshold for arousal from sleep
- fragmented sleep with multiple arousals
- increased daytime napping



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Are You Getting Enough Sleep?

You can tell if you are experiencing sleep problems if:

- You have trouble falling asleep at 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



Different Kinds of Sleep Problems

- Some sleeping problems are temporary and may be caused by stress or other factors, like poorly managed pain.
- If you notice your sleep problems are regularly occurring and interfere with your everyday life, you may have a sleeping disorder.

Common Reasons for Sleep Problems

- Drinking alcohol or 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 like water pills or stimulants.
- 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.

Common Sleeping Disorders



Insomnia:

- 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.

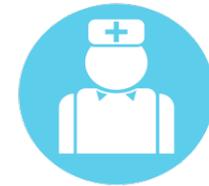
Sleep Apnea:

- Breathing stops – sometimes for as long as 10-60 seconds and the amount of oxygen in the blood drops.
- This can lead to you feeling sleepless and less rested throughout the day.

Identifying Underlying Problems

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 conditions interfering with your sleep?





Underlying Conditions

Several Underlying Chronic Conditions Can Cause Sleep Issues

- Cardiac: CHF
- Respiratory: COPD, OSA
- Gastrointestinal: GERD
- Urologic: Nocturia due to BPH or bladder instability
- Musculoskeletal: **Pain**
- Psychiatric: Depression, Anxiety, Mania

Sleeping Better As You Age



DURING THE DAY:

- Avoid large meals and drinking fluids a few hours before bedtime.
- Avoid napping.
- Get out of bed at the same time each morning.

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).
- Develop a sleep ritual (same routine each night before going to bed) and only go to bed if you are sleepy.

Sleeping Aids for Older Adults

Sleeping Medications

- 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.

Strategies to Consider?

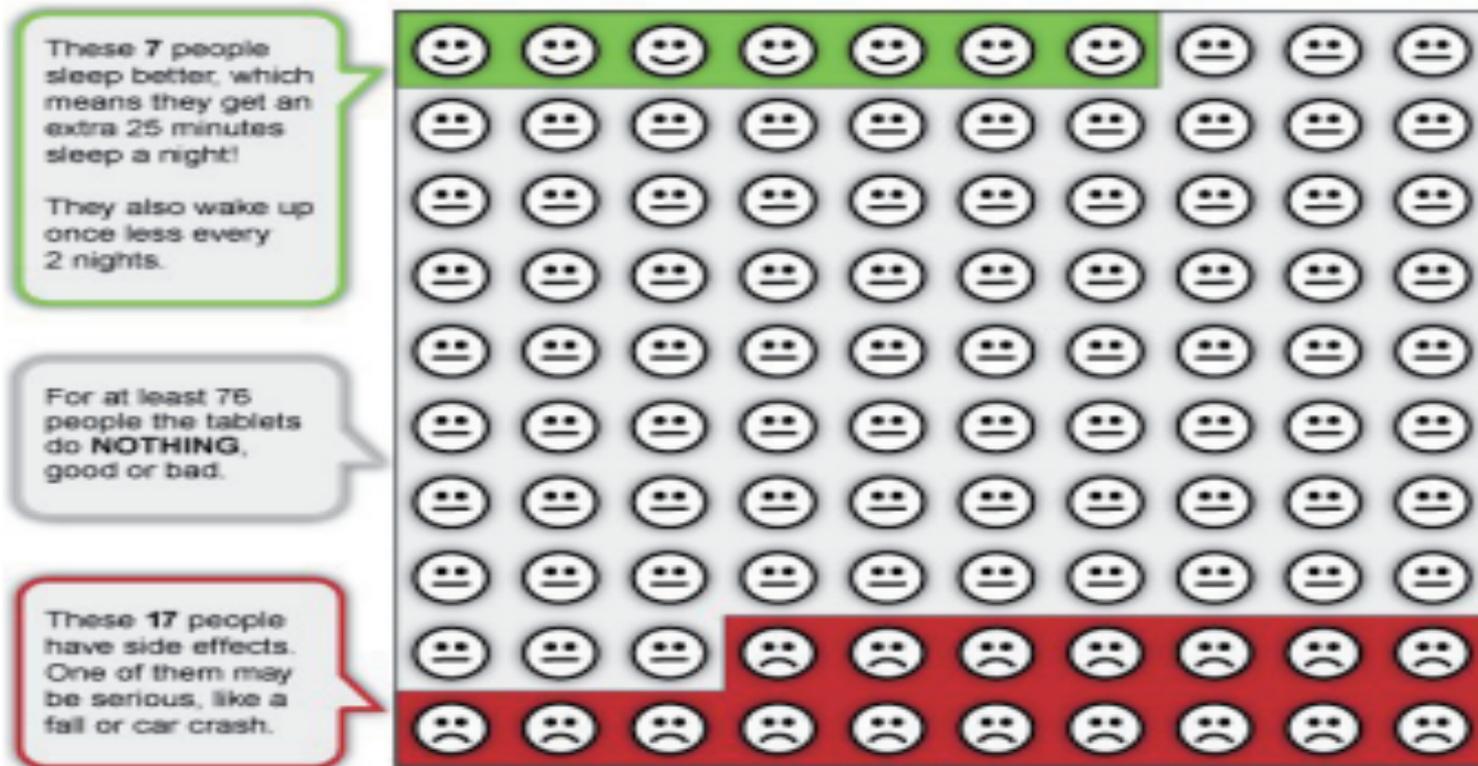
- Is what you are taking safe?
- Have you maximized all of the non-medication alternatives?
- Can you find safer alternatives to take?

Sleeping Aids for Older Adults

Medication	Mechanism	Adverse Effects
Benzodiazepines (Xanax, Ativan, Diazepam)	suppress stages 3 and 4 increase stage 2 decrease sleep latency decrease nocturnal awakening	daytime somnolence confusion falls
Non-Benzodiazepines (Zopiclone)	unclear	daytime somnolence confusion
Tricyclics (Amitryptaline)	decrease sleep latency	anticholinergic
Antihistamines (Gravol)	decrease alertness	anticholinergic

Sleeping Aids for Older Adults

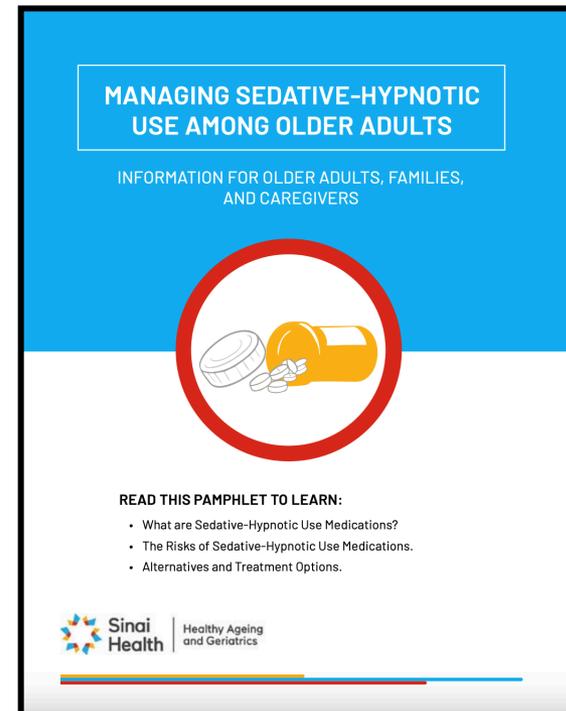
What would happen if 100 people aged over 60 years take sleeping tablets for more than a week? ¹¹



Adapted from Glass J et al BMJ 2005;331:1169-75

Managing Sedative-Hypnotic Use

- Nearly one-third of older people in Canada take sleeping pills, also known as sedative-hypnotics.
- These medications can have serious side effects. Older adults should try non-drug treatments first. There are often safer and better ways to improve sleep or reduce anxiety.



Find more information about sedative-hypnotic use in our free resource “Managing Sedative-Hypnotic Use in Older Adults” on our website <https://sinaigeriatrics.ca/patient-resources/managing-sedative-hypnotic-use/>

Safer Sleeping Aids...

Herbal Teas

- Some teas like 'Camomile' or "Sleepy Time Tea" etc have some herbals like Camomile or Valerian in them that can promote sleep.

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.
- You can try this out starting at 1-3mg – and see how it works for you. You can slowly increased up to a maximum of 10mg a night. Before starting this – chat first with your primary care prescriber and pharmacist so they can advise you further.

A Perfect Sleep?

- Many of us hope to achieve a perfect night's sleep
- Its important to appreciate that our ability to sleep and sleep well evolves as we age and this is normal
- We need to be more mindful of the things we do as we age and how that can help us sleep better
- Better addressing bad habits, and underlying health issues may help us sleep much better
- There are lots of sleep treatments out there, but some are more harmful than helpful
- Best to re-examine your issues, and see if you can manage them without additional treatments. Whatever you take, chat with your primary care provider or pharmacist if they are right for

Additional Resources

<https://sinaigeriatrics.ca/healtheducation/>

CANADIAN SLEEP SOCIETY

- The Canadian Sleep Society (CSS/SCS) provides resources and information on how to improve your sleeping patterns. www.css-scs.ca
- The CSS/SCS also offers a sleep clinic map to locate the nearest clinic in your area.

Questions?



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