

# SLEEP FOR OLDER ADULTS

## *DID YOU KNOW?*

Over half of elderly people report regular sleep disturbances.

## COMMON SLEEP DISORDERS

- Sleep apnea: People with sleep apnea have decreased breathing or stop breathing completely while sleeping.
- Insomnia: People with insomnia report trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, and wake up early at least 3 nights per week.
- Nocturia: People with nocturia, or nocturnal urination, wake up often at night to go to the bathroom.
- Other factors that may affect sleep: movement disorders, chronic pain, difficulty breathing, acid reflux, etc.

## *How much sleep is enough?*

As we age, we need less sleep, but you should still get about 7 hours each night.

## *DID YOU KNOW?*

There are things you can do to help you sleep better, even as you age.  
(Turn the page to find out some tips.)



<https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/news/2017/next-generation-led-lighting-could-help-improve-human-sleep-cycles>

## WHY IS SLEEP IMPORTANT?

Not getting enough good sleep can lead to...

- Poor quality of life, trouble with physical and mental activities during the day, worsening of diseases and conditions, and even early death.
- Specific symptoms include...
  - With sleep apnea: day time sleepiness, irritability, fatigue, headaches, trouble thinking, and health issues such as high blood pressure
  - With insomnia: higher fall risk, poor quality of life, trouble with physical and mental activities, and loss of independence
  - With nocturia: poor sleep quality

## WAYS TO IMPROVE SLEEP

- Maintain a regular sleep schedule. Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day.
- Avoid naps. Naps can make it harder to fall asleep and stay asleep.
- Do not watch TV or use the internet right before bed. These can make you feel even more awake, and you will have a harder time falling asleep.
- Do not read or watch TV in bed. Only sleep while in bed so your brain connects your bed to sleep.
- Limit your caffeine. Caffeine can stay in your body for hours. Try to only drink it before noon.
- Exercise regularly. Exercise helps us sleep longer and better.
- Try meditation or just have some quiet time to relax.
- Take a warm shower or bath. The warm water can help you relax before bed.

## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I AM HAVING TROUBLE SLEEPING?

- Keep a sleep journal. Try to track how much you sleep, what time you go to bed, and what time you wake up. This will help you understand your own sleep habits better.
- Talk to your doctor. Your doctor can help you find a solution that is right for you.



<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/good-nights-sleep>

Authors: Danielle Lozon, SPT and Taylor Stratton, SPT  
Central Michigan University

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