

SLEEP AS YOU *grow older*

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The American Academy
of Sleep Medicine
www.aasmnet.org

ARE YOU HAVING TROUBLE *sleeping?*

As you have aged, you may have noticed that you have developed problems sleeping.

You may have thought, ***“Having trouble sleeping is just part of getting older.”***

THIS IS FALSE.

Some health changes are a normal part of growing older, but difficulty sleeping may be a sign that you have a sleep disorder or other health problem.

HEALTH PROBLEMS THAT CAN CAUSE DIFFICULTY SLEEPING

DEPRESSION: Problems sleeping are a common sign of depression. Some people wake up in the early morning and can't fall back asleep, and others sleep more than usual.

SIGNS OF DEPRESSION IN OLDER ADULTS

Signs of depression include:

- Lacking interest in or not enjoying activities that usually make you happy
 - Loss of appetite
 - Withdrawing from other people
 - Feeling like you have no energy and are worn out
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GRIEF/SADNESS: These feelings are more common if you have recently lost a loved one. Unwanted or repetitive thoughts can interfere with falling asleep.



PAIN: Many other medical conditions can cause pain that interferes with sleep.

Conditions that cause pain include:

- Arthritis
- Headache
- Cancer
- Fibromyalgia

Other health problems, such as lung or heart conditions, can also cause problems sleeping. Speak with your health care provider if you think that you may have a medical condition that is affecting your sleep.

SLEEP DISORDERS

Some sleep disorders are more common in older adults.

RESTLESS LEGS SYNDROME: Restless Legs Syndrome, or RLS, happens when you have an overwhelming urge to move your legs. You may also feel burning or itching inside your legs. Symptoms usually occur in the evening or before bed. RLS can make it hard for you to go to sleep, and you may be tired the next day.

Not getting enough sleep may lead to memory problems.

INSOMNIA: Insomnia is a sleep disorder that occurs when you consistently have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep. Older adults with insomnia may wake up early in the morning and be unable to fall back asleep.

OBSTRUCTIVE SLEEP APNEA: Obstructive Sleep Apnea, or OSA, occurs when your airway collapses part or all of the way while you are sleeping.

Signs of OSA include:

- Loud or frequent snoring
- Daytime sleepiness or tiredness, even after a full night's sleep
- Choking or gasping while you sleep

If you have symptoms of a sleep disorder, speak with your health care provider.

CHECK OUT THESE COMMON PROBLEM AREAS

ALCOHOL: Don't use alcohol to help yourself sleep. It might help you fall asleep, but it makes it more likely you will wake up during the night or have nightmares.

SLEEPING PILLS: They can leave you feeling tired the next day. Also, they may cause you to take more naps during the day, which makes it harder for you to sleep at night.

MEDICATIONS: Many medications may affect your ability to fall and stay asleep or your sleep quality. Examples include beta blockers and over-the-counter pain medications.

Ask your health care provider if any of your medications could be interfering with your sleep.



WHAT CAN I DO TO IMPROVE MY SLEEP?

GET SOME EXERCISE: Sometimes people can't fall asleep because they didn't get enough activity during the day. Ask your health care provider before beginning a new exercise program.

TAKE A SHORT NAP: Short naps during the day may be a good addition to nighttime sleep. Do not nap for longer than 1 hour or in the late afternoon, or you may have problems sleeping at night.

CHANGE YOUR SLEEP HABITS: Don't force yourself to stay in bed until the time you think you should get up. Get out of bed when you wake up, and don't get back into bed until you are ready to sleep for the night.

If you continue to experience problems after trying these solutions, please talk with your health care provider.

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