

Sleep and Aging



Sleep is important for your health and well-being. As you get older, it is normal to see changes in your sleep patterns, including how much sleep you are able to get and how well you are able to sleep.

Sleep disorders, such as trouble falling asleep or sleeping through the night, are also more common in older adults. If this happens, you may feel tired in the day and find it harder to concentrate or do the things you enjoy.

General Tips to Improve your Sleep

1. Taking naps can disrupt your sleep. If you do take a nap, limit yourself to a total of 30 to 60 minutes during the day. Do not nap after 3:00 p.m.
2. Avoid caffeine at least 4 to 6 hours before bed. Caffeine is a stimulant found in coffee, tea, chocolate, and energy and cola drinks.
3. Do not smoke before bedtime or in the night. The nicotine in cigarettes is also a stimulant.
4. Keep a regular sleep schedule. Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day.
5. Keep a regular bedtime routine. For example, after you wash your face, brush your teeth, and use the bathroom, relax by listening to music, reading, or having a warm decaffeinated drink or light snack. Doing the same routine every night will help send a signal to your brain and body that bedtime is soon, and will make you sleepy.
6. Turn off the TV and other electronics at night. Do not use devices or watch TV in bed.
7. Look for signs of sleepiness, such as yawning or heavy lids. Go to bed once you start having these sleepiness signs.
8. Stress can be one of the reasons you may have trouble getting to sleep or staying asleep. Meditate or do relaxation or deep breathing exercises to reduce stress. You will find that sleepiness will come slowly once you relax and quiet the mind. If you would like to know about other natural ways to reduce stress, ask a member of your healthcare team.
9. Ask your doctor to review the medicines you are taking. Some medicines may be keeping you awake at night.



Sleep Tips while in the Hospital

If you are having trouble sleeping while in the hospital, try the General Tips on page 1. In addition, make sure to:

1. Keep the lights on during the day and darken your room at night.
2. Adjust the temperature in your room using the controls on your Integrated Bedside Terminal (IBT).
3. Ask a member of your healthcare team for additional blankets if you are cold.
4. Ask a member of your healthcare team to adjust the bed to a comfortable position.
5. Tell a member of your healthcare team if you have pain. They can adjust your pain medicine to make you feel more comfortable.



Sleep Tips at Home

Once you are back at home, continue to follow the General Tips on page 1. In addition, try these tips:

1. Exercise, but not too close to bedtime. This will deepen your sleep.
2. Prepare your sleep area. Unclutter your room and ensure your mattress and pillow are comfortable.
3. If you have been tossing and turning for at least 20 minutes, get out of bed. If you cannot fall asleep, leave the room and do a quiet activity until you feel sleepy.
4. Do not use alcohol to sleep. It may help you fall asleep, but it will eventually cause you to wake up, disrupting your sleep.



Should I take sleeping pills to improve my sleep?

Sleeping pills do not create a natural sleep. Taking them long-term can actually worsen sleep disorders.

If you are taking sleeping pills and wish to stop, speak with your doctor, nurse practitioner, or pharmacist **FIRST BEFORE** changing or stopping your medicine.

