

TIPS FOR SENIORS DURING SLEEP AWARENESS MONTH

AWARENESS MONTH



Sleep Awareness Month

Sleep Awareness Month: How to Improve Senior Sleep Patterns

Sleep deprivation and other sleep issues can impact senior health significantly. Learn how to improve sleep patterns for seniors.

An average of 7½ to 9 hours of sleep each night is considered healthy for most adults. Seniors are often unable to sleep this much due to a variety of sleep-related problems. During sleep awareness month, learn what can be done to help seniors establish healthy sleep patterns.

*Sleep Awareness Month is sponsored by the [National Sleep Foundation](#).

Sleep disturbance in the aging is often just the result of reduced REM sleep. In other words, seniors tend to be lighter sleepers.

How Aging Affects Sleep

Unfortunately, changes in sleep patterns are a normal part of aging. Many seniors have difficulty falling asleep and staying asleep. In some cases, the challenge is due to a sleeping disorder or the side effect of a medication.

However, sleep disturbance in the aging is often just the result of reduced REM sleep. In other words, seniors tend to be lighter sleepers. They wake up more often due to noise, aches, movement, the need to use the bathroom, etc.

([The Sleep Foundation](#))



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Common Sleep Illnesses Seniors Face

For those seniors whose difficulties with sleep result from medical conditions, it is important to receive medical treatment. Encourage sleep-deprived seniors to see the doctor if they experience:

1. Advanced Sleep Phase Syndrome
2. Sleep Apnea
3. Restless Leg Syndrome
4. Insomnia
5. Sleep-related side effects of medication
6. Sleep-related side effects of underlying diseases

Issues like these are often addressed through lifestyle changes or medications. Seniors can consult with their doctor to learn about the best treatment options for their particular problem.

([WebMD](#))

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Sleep Tips for the Aging

To make the most out of sleep, seniors can use these simple tips:



1. Be Mindful

Stress, worry, and negative thought patterns can disrupt sleep—even if seniors try to “think positively” right before bed. Since sleep deprivation affects mental health and vice versa, it is important to encourage seniors to develop a healthy response to stress at all hours.



2. Exercise Regularly

Physical activity can help the body sleep. Regular exercise also offers health benefits that positively impact sleep, like lower blood pressure, stress relief, and improved breathing.



3. Form a Bedtime Routine

Many habits can influence sleep for better or for worse. Lying in bed during the day can disrupt sleep patterns. Watching television or screen time on the phone at night can also delay sleep. Encourage seniors to establish a bedtime routine that includes doing something quiet and relaxing for an hour.



4. Eat and Drink for Better Sleep

Sometimes seniors drink alcohol before bed because it makes them sleepy. However, alcohol tends to wake people up in the middle of the night and reduce REM sleep cycles. Food does the same. Seniors should avoid eating food or drinking alcohol for 2-3 hours before bedtime.

([Better Health While Aging](#))

Prevention Tips

Some sleep problems can be prevented using these tips:

- Maintain a healthy weight
- Address breathing problems
- Track medications and corresponding side effects
- Develop a healthy mindset
- Stick to a routine
- Don't nap for more than 20 minutes at a time

([FamilyDoctor.org](#))



Warning!

Many medications designed to aid sleep are habit forming. Such drugs often have impactful side effects as well. Be sure that seniors only use pharmaceutical sleep aids in the short-term and that they follow doctor's directions. ([WebMD](#))



Home Care Tip

Sleep problems can cause mental health issues. They can also be a sign of an existing mental health problem. If a senior has difficulty with sleep and exhibits emotional trouble, suggest that they have their mental wellness evaluated. ([Helpguide](#))