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Sleep

Seniors' Health and Wellness Institute,

COSCO

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Why Is Sleep Important?

- Emotional Well Being
 - Improves mood
 - Decreases depression
 - Decreases agitation
- Mental Well Being
 - Improves concentration
 - Improves memory
- Physical Well Being
 - Promotes healing
 - Reduces blood pressure
 - Builds immune system
 - Reduces fatigue



Circadian rhythms

These are 24-hour cycles that are part of the body's internal clock, running in the background, carrying out essential functions and processes.

- One of the most important circadian rhythms is the sleep-wake cycle.

The sleep hormone, melatonin, starts to be produced as soon as the sun goes down. Melatonin tells the brain and body that sleep needs to happen soon.

- It helps to regulate the timing of sleep, but doesn't do much to generate sleep.

Signs of Sleep Difficulties

In the morning:

- difficulty getting up and ready
- feeling unrefreshed

During the day:

- feeling drowsy
- frequent yawning
- requiring naps

At Night:

- falling asleep before going to bed
- taking a long time to fall asleep
- waking frequently during the night
- waking very early and not being able to go back to sleep
- snoring, gasping, choking
- stopping breathing

About Sleeping & Aging

People believe that as we age, we require less sleep. In fact, most seniors require 7-8 hours of sleep each night.

As people age, it takes longer to fall asleep, a phenomenon called increased sleep latency. And sleep efficiency—the percentage of time spent asleep while in bed—decreases as well.

Normal Changes as We Age

- Seniors shift towards going to sleep earlier and getting up earlier.
- They wake more easily during the night.
- They feel less energized after sleep.

Types of Insomnia

- **Transient:** Lasting days or a week or two
- **Short-Term:** Lasting several weeks
- **Chronic:** Lasting months to years
- **COVID-somnia:** It's a consequence of all the changes we are and have been experiencing during and after COVID.

Sleep Disorders

- **Microsleeps** are brief episodes of sleep that occur in the midst of ongoing wakeful activity. They can happen in people who are sleep deprived, often without their awareness.
- **Automatic behavior** refers to a period of several minutes or more during which a person is awake and performing routine duties but not attending to her or his surroundings or responding to changes in the environment. These episodes occur when people are extremely sleepy and are another consequence of sleep deprivation.
- **Obstructive Sleep Apnea**
With this disorder, breathing temporarily stops during sleep.
Treatment: Continuous Positive Airway pressure (CPAP) therapy, weight loss
- **Restless Leg Syndrome** consists of unpleasant leg sensations that disrupt sleep or can occur by simply sitting still for a longer period of time - e.g. during a concert.
Treatment: medication
- **Advanced Sleep Phase Disorder** is where someone falls asleep and awakes at unusually early times.

Sleep Hygiene

Sleep Hygiene is the circumstances, routines and habits that affect how well you sleep.

Poor Sleep Hygiene

- Drinking caffeine late in the day.
- Smoking, especially close to bedtime.
- Drinking fluids right before bed.
- Making plans or working out problems while in bed.
- Worrying about not being able to fall asleep.
- Consuming alcohol before bed.
- Eating large meals late at night.
- Exercising right before bed.
- Watching TV in bed.
- Using computers, tablets, cell phones, etc. before bed.
- Napping more than 20 minutes during the day.

Good Sleep Hygiene

- Waking up at the same time each day.
- Sleeping in a comfortable bed.
- Ensuring the room is dark, quiet, and a comfortable temperature.
- Using the bed only for sexual activity and sleep.
- Going to bed only when you are somewhat tired.

Tips for a Better Sleep

- Practicing good sleep hygiene.
- Exercising regularly.
- Eating a balanced diet.
- Getting some sunlight every day.
- Doing a calming activity before bed.

What Else Can Be Done ?

Professional Help

- Consult a family doctor if sleep difficulties persist longer than two weeks.
- Keep a log of sleep and activities to show your doctor.

Prescription Medications

- can be habit forming
- use only as a last resort
- take at the lowest dose possible for the shortest time possible

Natural Sleep Products

- **Melatonin** may be effective for some for changing daily sleep patterns. However, it is not recommended for insomnia except for people who are melatonin deficient.
- **Botanically based products** such as chamomile, valerian, and lavender have not been researched enough to prove their effectiveness.
- **Magnesium** may help reduce leg cramping.

Psychological Treatments

- cognitive therapy
- sleep restriction
- relaxation

More About Sleep Apnea

- Loud snoring, especially when it's accompanied by daytime fatigue, may be a sign of sleep apnea, a potentially serious disorder in which breathing repeatedly stops and starts as you sleep.

- Untreated sleep apnea can be dangerous and detrimental to your health, so it's important to see a doctor if you suspect that you or a loved one might have it.

Sleep Apnea Episode

What happens:

- Sleep apnea affects the way you breathe when you're sleeping. In untreated sleep apnea, breathing is briefly interrupted or becomes very shallow during sleep.



- These breathing pauses typically last between 10 to 20 seconds and can occur up to hundreds of times a night, jolting you out of your natural sleep rhythm.
- Consequences: you spend more time in light sleep and less time in the deep, restorative sleep you need to be energetic, mentally sharp, and productive the next day.
- The chronic sleep deprivation that comes with sleep apnea results in daytime sleepiness, slow reflexes,

poor concentration, and an increased risk of accidents. Sleep apnea can also lead to serious health problems over time, including diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, and weight gain.

Treatments

With treatment you can control the symptoms, get your sleep back on track, and start enjoying being refreshed and alert every day.

- Continuous Positive Airway Pressure Device (CPAP) is a mask worn snugly over the nose which supplies pressurized air.
- Chin straps are designed to stop the mouth from dropping open during sleep.
- Oral Devices are worn in the mouth like a mouth-guard during sleep. They hold the lower jaw forward just enough to keep the airway open.
- First-line treatment includes weight loss, reduction of alcohol intake, and cessation of smoking.

Resources

Canadian Sleep Society

Phone: 514-509-2113 Web: css-scs.ca

Sleep Disorder Brochures [For a fee; ask your doctor about copies]

Web: css-scs.ca/resources/brochures

Eight Tips to help Older People Fall - and Stay - Asleep

<https://healthblog.uofmhealth.org/wellness-prevention/8-tips-to-help-older-people-fall-and-stay-asleep>

How Sleep Works This recently updated article offers key details about what happens to the mind and body during sleep.

<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/how-sleep-works>

How to get a good night's sleep without medication: This booklet offers habits to adopt to improve your sleep without taking medications. It is available on the site noted below. Scroll down to the section labelled "Sleep well without medication". There you will find the link for the actual brochure.

<https://www.deprescribingnetwork.ca/sleep/>

Sleepwell is a non-profit initiative out of Dalhousie University that offers a wide range of information about sleep and potential challenges to a good night's sleep.

<https://mysleepwell.ca>

Why Do We Need Sleep?

<https://www.sleepfoundation.org/how-sleep-works/why-do-we-need-sleep>

How to get a good night's sleep without medication

