

# Aging and Sleep

Restful sleep is good for you at any age. But as we get older, our sleep patterns change. Here's what usually happens: less sleep with more interruptions and less time in deep sleep or dream sleep.

## Are You Getting Enough Sleep?

Every person's sleep needs are different. The National Sleep Foundation recommends that adults get 7 to 9 hours a night.

If you're getting less sleep than when you were younger but still feel rested and energetic during the day, it might just be that you now need less sleep than you used to.

But if your lack of sleep affects you during the day, then it's time to take action.

First, try the easiest things, like these:

- Stick to a regular bedtime.
- Turn off your computer and TV an hour before bed.
- Take a little time to relax before you go to sleep.
- Spend less time in bed. If you can, get up. You want to train your brain that the bed is for sleep. Also, limit daytime naps.
- If you can't sleep, get up for a little while and try again.
- Don't drink alcohol close to bedtime.

If that doesn't take care of your sleep problems, tell your doctor about it. They can check on any conditions you might have, your medications, and let you know if a sleep specialist might help.

## What Else Might Cause Sleep Problems When You're Older?

- **Change:** Life changes such as moving, physical limitations due to illness, or the death of a loved one can cause stress and make it hard to sleep.
- **Conditions:** Arthritis, sleep apnea, and restless legs syndrome can all make sleeping harder.
- **Retirement:** You might have a lot more downtime and be less active during the day. That can throw off your sleep-wake schedule.
- **Illness:** If you have heart failure, arthritis, heartburn, an enlarged prostate, or Alzheimer's disease, then you may have a hard time falling or staying asleep.
- **Medications:** Some drugs might keep you from falling asleep or staying asleep. Some can even make you feel more awake at night.

Again, talk to your doctor if you're having trouble sleeping. They can help make sure any conditions you have are being treated well, adjust medications that may be affecting you, and offer suggestions or referrals to people who can help you deal with life's changes and get the sleep you deserve.

### SOURCES:

National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. The National Sleep Foundation. National Institutes of Health.  
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[http://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/guide/aging-affects-sleep?ecd=wnl\\_slw\\_072414&ctr=wnl-slw-072414\\_nsl-ld-stry\\_3&mb=fX8rxdS%40tzxsSWriAjTYouHnVev1imbC5BtYhTU5%2fzg%3d](http://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/guide/aging-affects-sleep?ecd=wnl_slw_072414&ctr=wnl-slw-072414_nsl-ld-stry_3&mb=fX8rxdS%40tzxsSWriAjTYouHnVev1imbC5BtYhTU5%2fzg%3d)