



Healthy Sleep

February 25, 2022

Getting the Sleep You Need: Challenges and Tips

As you age, you may find yourself sleeping less, taking longer to fall asleep (called sleep latency) and waking up more during the night.¹ Not getting enough sleep can impact your psychological and physical health.² Here are two of the main sleep disorders that prevent older people from getting a good night's sleep and some helpful tips on getting the sleep you need.

1. Insomnia¹

Insomnia is characterized by having a hard time falling asleep (sleep onset insomnia) and/or remaining asleep (sleep maintenance insomnia). Impacts of insomnia include daytime sleepiness and cognitive impairments while awake, such as trouble concentrating and paying attention. Treatments for insomnia vary, including sleep education, cognitive behavioural therapy, medications and lifestyle changes such as a healthy diet and more exercise.

2. Sleep Apnea²

Sleep apnea is characterized by repeated and chronic involuntary breathing interruptions during sleep, as airway muscles collapse and do not allow air to flow. This results in lower oxygen levels and poorer sleep quality. Daytime symptoms include cognitive symptoms, morning headaches and irritability. Obstructive sleep apnea is the most common respiratory sleep disorder. Treatments include Continuous Positive Airway Pressure devices (CPAP), changing your sleeping position and oral devices.

5 Tips for Healthy Sleep³

1. **Make your sleep a health priority.** If you have sleep concerns, such as the impact of menopause or side effects from medication, talk to your doctor.
2. **Adopt a regular sleep-wake cycle** that results in restfulness.
3. **Create an optimal environment for sleep.** This could include lighting, comfortable pillows and mattress, and a cooler temperature.
4. **Maintain healthy sleep hygiene** by exercising, eating well, creating a calming bedtime routine and avoiding caffeine, alcohol and nicotine before bed.
5. **Don't stress too much about sleep.** Age-related sleep changes are normal. But if your daily life is impacted, don't hesitate to reach out for help.

Learn more:

Sleep
On
It

Sleep On It has resources and information about sleep disorders, age-specific recommendations and much more:

<https://sleeponitcanada.ca/special-reports-on-sleep/what-normal-sleep-changes-can-be-expected-as-you-age/>

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References

1. Fry, A. (2020, September 18). Insomnia & Seniors. <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/insomnia/older-adults>
2. Sleep On it. (n.d.). Why Sleep? <https://sleeponitcanada.ca/all-about-sleep/why-sleep/>
3. Sleep On it (n.d.) What Normal Sleep Changes Can Be Expected As You Age? <https://sleeponitcanada.ca/special-reports-on-sleep/what-normal-sleep-changes-can-be-expected-as-you-age/>

About CanAge

CanAge is Canada's National Seniors' Advocacy organization.

We are a non-partisan non-profit organization that educates, empowers and mobilizes people on the issues that matter most to older Canadians and their caregivers.

We work to advance the rights and well-being of Canadians as we age in order to live vibrant and connected lives.

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