



Tips on Healthy Ageing

SLEEPING WELL

Your body needs sleep to repair any cell damage, to refresh your immune system and help your concentration and memory function. Many older adults get less sleep than they need because they have more trouble falling asleep, sleep less deeply and wake up more frequently throughout the night. The amount of sleep a person needs varies between individuals, but generally older people need the same amount of sleep as younger adults, 7-9 hours.

Older adults with sleeping problems are more likely to have depressed mood, attention and memory problems, experience daytime sleepiness, have more night time falls and use more sleeping tablets.

Getting a good night's sleep can have a huge impact on quality of life. Sleep that is disturbed and unrefreshing is not an inevitable or normal part of ageing.

Tips for a good night's sleep:

- develop a bedtime routine - go to bed at the same time each night and wake up at the same time, and take time to relax before bedtime
- don't nap too much during the day
- try to get exposure to natural light each afternoon (at least 2 hours to help regulate your sleep-wake cycle)
- keep active during the day, exercise at regular times each day, but finish exercising at least three hours before bedtime
- avoid caffeine drinks late in the day and evening - they are a stimulant
- don't drink alcohol or smoke to help you sleep - alcohol can make it harder to stay asleep, and nicotine is a stimulant
- large meals close to bedtime may keep you awake; however, a light snack in the evening (e.g. warm beverage or a few crackers) may help
- create a safe and comfortable sleeping environment – where the room is the right temperature, is dark enough, has little or no noise, the mattress is not too hard or too soft. Use your bedroom for sleep only
- try not to worry about your sleep
- limit the use of sleeping tablets - they are a short term solution and can cause long term health problems
- try some relaxation techniques if necessary
- investigate the causes of your sleep problems and address them

If you find that disturbed sleep is frequently leaving you so tired that you cannot function normally during the day, please consult your doctor.

Compiled from information from the Better Health Channel, Australia and the National Institute on Aging, USA.