

"NORMAL" Sleep

Sleep patterns begin to change between the ages of 40-50 years. Research has shown we get 1-½ hours less sleep per night at age 60 compared to age 20.

"Remember, we are all unique and "normal" varies greatly"

"Normal" sleep consists of 5 distinct stages

- Stages I and II are called "light" sleep (transitional)
- Stages III and IV are called "deep" sleep (slow wave)
- Stage V is known as "dream" sleep (REM)

Although an older person may spend as much time dreaming as the younger ones, they get less of the deeper stages of sleep and awaken more often. Sleep is therefore often "light and fitful."

It is thought that "dream" (REM) sleep is essential for the brain to sort or store information, while "deep" sleep restores energy and body function.

For the older adult:

- May take longer to get to sleep
- May find settling down to sleep more difficult
- May wake up more frequently during the night and then take longer to fall back to sleep
- May sleep less at one stretch and become less able to sustain sleep
- May be more alert after sleeping
- May find it easier to nap during the day
- May find it easier to wake up
- May take longer to adjust changes in sleep/wake patterns (i.e. jet lag)

The older adult tires more easily and requires a longer period of time to regain their energy after an activity.

Lack of rest time may lead to a lowered energy level, which in turn may cause the older adult to avoid activities, which help keep us healthy.

SLEEP HELPERS

- High protein foods such as poultry, meat, eggs and dairy products contain an essential amino acid called "**tryptophan**" which acts as a natural sedative. These foods are also good sources of calcium and B-complex vitamins, which are natural stress relievers.
- Foods high in carbohydrates such as bread, bananas, apple juice, figs and dates, to name a few, help liberate the **tryptophan** in food making it more available to the sleep centers in the brain.
- Foods high in **both** fat **and** carbohydrates such as avocados, brazil nuts, peanuts and fatty seafood such as salmon, mackerel and bluefish produce **tryptophan** even faster than eating carbohydrates alone.
- Herbal teas such as chamomile is a "good one to sleep on"

SUGGESTED SLEEP SNACKS

- Small banana split with nuts
- Fruit shake (1 cup milk blended with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup fruit)
- Eggnog (1 cup)
- Toasted bran muffin with butter
- Sardines on toast
- Cold roast beef
- Turkey sandwich
- Cold or hot milk with ovaltine or other flavoring

SLEEP SOLUTIONS

- **If your trouble is falling asleep**, eat your snack two to four hours before bed. This allows the sleep effect to reach its peak at the time you are settling.
- **If your problem is waking up during the night**, have your snack immediately before bedtime. This allows the sleep effect to peak when you've been asleep a few hours.
- **If drowsiness during the day is making you an insomniac at night**, limit all daytime carbohydrates. Instead have your high carbohydrate snacks about 2 hours before bedtime.