the Sleep Charity

Practical Sleep Tips for over 50s

ADVICE SHEET

As we age, our sleep naturally changes. You may notice:

Waking up more during the night. Short wake-ups become more common.

Lighter sleep. You may get less deep, refreshing sleep than you used to.

More daytime naps. You might feel like you need a rest during the day.

Smaller drop in body temperature. This can make sleep feel lighter or more broken.

Earlier bedtimes and wake-ups. Many people prefer to go to bed earlier and wake earlier as they get older.

Below are practical, easy tips to help you sleep better

Move your body
Aim for 20–30 minutes of exercise at least three times a week. A brisk walk is great - just try not to do it too close to bedtime.

Try not to worry about sleeping
Stressing about falling asleep often makes it harder. Stay calm and focus on relaxing instead.

Keep naps short
Long afternoon naps can make it harder to sleep at night. If you need a nap, try to keep it to 30 minutes or less and before 3pm.

Cut down on evening caffeine
Coffee, tea, chocolate and fizzy drinks can keep you awake. Try a warm milky drink or herbal tea instead.

Get some sunlight
Spending time outdoors helps your body clock work better, which can improve your sleep.

Watch how much you drink before bed
Too many drinks late in the evening can lead to frequent trips to the loo. And remember, alcohol might help you fall asleep at first but often wakes you later.

Make your bedroom sleep-friendly
Keep it cool, dark, and quiet. A comfortable, supportive mattress can also make a big difference.

Don't go to bed too full or too hungry
Feeling uncomfortable can stop you sleeping well.

Check your medicines
Some medicines can make you sleepy in the day, while others can keep you awake at night. If you're unsure, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

Stick to regular wake up times
Try to get up at the same time every day. It will help train your body's internal clock. A routine helps your body know when it's time to sleep.