

SLEEP ADVICE FOR OVER 50S

As you get older, you experience a change in your sleeping patterns.

- You'll experience numerous brief awakenings in the night.
- There is a loss of deepest levels of non-REM sleep.
- There is more daytime napping.
- There is less of a drop in body temperature during sleep for the elderly.
- You will often prefer earlier bedtimes and earlier wake-ups.

There are all sorts of ways in which you can help yourselves to a better night's sleep – mostly it's just a case of adjusting your daily routine as sleeping patterns change – and trying to limit the cat naps!

- **Exercise:** 20 – 30 minutes at least three days a week is ideal. A brisk walk will do – but not too close to bedtime.
- **Limit naps:** Taking long afternoon naps can interfere with night-time sleep patterns. If you need a nap, don't take longer than 30 minutes.
- **Get out in the fresh air:** Studies show people who get adequate natural daylight tend to sleep better at night.
- **Create a good sleep environment:** Sleep in a cool, dark, quiet room on a comfortable, supportive mattress.
- **Check medications:** Some medications may cause daytime drowsiness while others may cause sleeplessness. Ask your doctor.
- **Don't worry about falling asleep:** Stay relaxed. The more you worry, the less you'll sleep.
- **Avoid caffeine in the evening:** Stimulants such as coffee, tea, chocolate and fizzy drinks make it harder to fall asleep and stay asleep. Try a warm milky drink instead.
- **Watch how much you drink:** Limit drinking liquids a few hours before bedtime to save being 'up and down' all night. And remember that while alcohol may initially help you to relax and sleep, it may keep you awake later in the night.
- **Don't go to bed too full or too hungry:** This may cause physical discomfort, making it difficult to sleep through the night.
- **Keep regular hours:** Go to bed at the same time each night and wake up at the same time each morning. Keeping to a routine helps your biological clock.

For more information, contact The Sleep Charity or your representative.

For more information and advice, visit The Sleep Charity at thesleepcharity.org.uk or contact us on info@thesleepcharity.org.uk