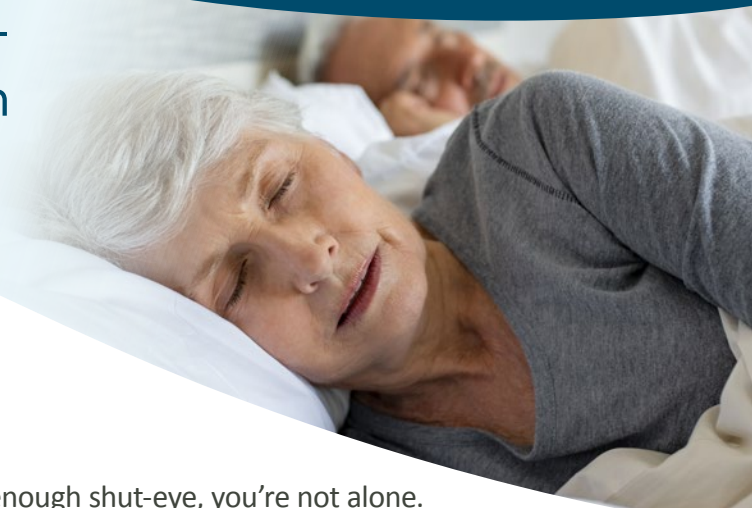


Sleep – for your health

Welcome to the **Pathway to Health** newsletter published regularly by Bayshore HealthCare to support families and informal caregivers in caring for your loved ones. Each edition features a new theme related to health and well-being, and also provides information, resources and suggestions to help you manage health issues.



How well did you sleep last night? If you have trouble getting enough shut-eye, you're not alone. One in three Canadians is sleep-deprived, according to research from Statistics Canada.

For optimal physical and mental health, medical experts say we need seven to nine hours of sleep each night, or seven to eight hours for adults 65 and older. One-third of us typically get less than seven hours.

Statistics Canada also found that many of us suffer from poor sleep quality: 55% of women and 43% of men aged 18 to 64 have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep either "sometimes," "most of the time" or "all of the time," as do 59% of women and 40% of men aged 65 to 79. Almost half of us don't find our sleep refreshing, and one-third of us experience daytime drowsiness.

How sleep affects your health

Why are sleep quantity and quality important? Inadequate sleep has been linked to serious health issues including obesity, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, depression, injuries and even premature death. Lack of rest also weakens the immune system, making us more vulnerable to infectious diseases such as colds and the flu. In addition, people who sleep less than six hours per night, or have trouble falling asleep, have an increased risk of high blood pressure.

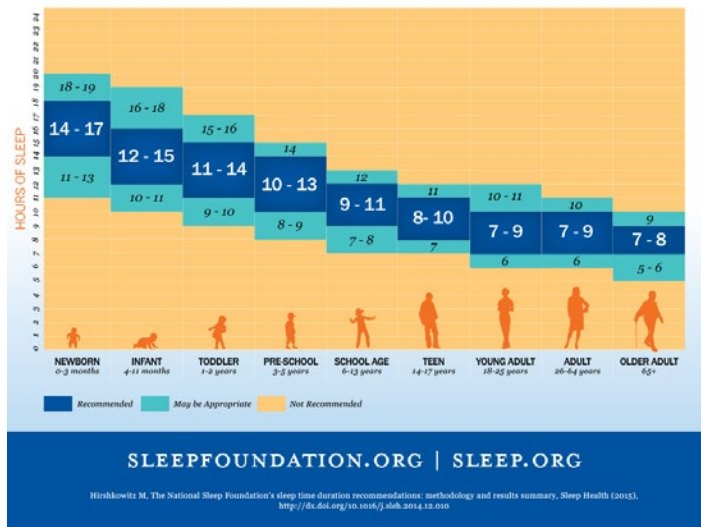
Poor sleep also negatively affects our thinking, concentration, learning ability, perception, judgment, response time and creativity. Inadequate sleep can influence our mood, causing irritability and stress, and over time it may raise the risk of developing anxiety and depression. All of these issues can contribute to poor performance and productivity at work or school.

How sleep changes with age

Our need for sleep changes over time. The following chart shows the daily guidelines from the experts at the National Sleep Foundation in the U.S.:

NATIONAL SLEEP FOUNDATION

SLEEP DURATION RECOMMENDATIONS



In addition to sleeping less, older adults commonly experience the following sleep changes, even if they do not have a medical condition, sleep disorder or other health issue:

- Waking up earlier and going to bed earlier
- Fewer hours of nighttime sleep
- Taking naps during the day
- Waking more frequently at night
- Sleeping lighter (starting in mid-life, around age 40)

continued ▶

How to get better sleep

Sleep is a necessity, not a luxury – try to make it a priority. These strategies can help you increase your likelihood of getting good-quality sleep:

Get exposure to bright light during the day. This will support your body's natural circadian rhythm, or "body clock," which regulates many biological processes and helps determine sleep patterns.

Include physical activity in your daily routine. Take a walk at lunchtime, for example. (Just don't exercise close to bedtime.)

Keep your schedule consistent. Go to bed at the same time each night, and rise at the same time each morning, even on weekends.

Avoid consuming caffeine after 3 p.m. Caffeine – found in tea, coffee, soft drinks and energy drinks – lingers in the bloodstream for up to eight hours.

Don't nap too much. Short power naps (up to 30 minutes) can be beneficial, but long daytime naps can decrease nighttime sleep quality.

Set up your bedroom for better sleep – it should be quiet, dark and cool (about 16 to 20 degrees Celsius). Block ambient and street noise with ear plugs, and install thick curtains to minimize light and sound. If your pillow, bedding and mattress are uncomfortable or worn out, consider replacing them.

Reduce fluid intake one to two hours before bedtime, to avoid having to get up to use the bathroom. Also avoid eating a heavy meal late in the evening.

Dim the lights an hour before you go to sleep.

Avoid using screens and devices – including TVs, smartphones, tablets and laptops – two hours before bedtime.

Try breathing exercises or meditation to relax before bedtime. If you have a lot on your mind, write it down on paper and deal with it the next day.

Take a warm shower or bath, or try soaking your feet in hot water. Surprisingly, this may lower your body's core temperature (by distributing warmth to hands and feet), helping you cool down for sleep.

Don't use alcohol as a sleep aid. It may help you fall asleep faster, but you may wake in the middle of the night, which reduces sleep quality. Alcohol also reduces REM (rapid eye movement) sleep, which is the most restorative kind. Inadequate REM sleep can contribute to daytime drowsiness and affect concentration.

Do something relaxing. If you can't fall asleep within 20 minutes of turning in, go to another room and do a relaxing activity, like reading or listening to music. When you feel sleepy, return to bed.

Resources

Canadian Sleep Society – Patient Brochures

css-scs.ca/resources/brochures

Relaxation Exercises for Falling Asleep (National Sleep Foundation)

www.sleepfoundation.org/articles/relaxation-exercises-falling-asleep

Physical Activity Tips (Government of Canada)

www.canada.ca/en/services/health/publications/healthy-living.html#ph

1.877.289.3997 / clientservice@bayshore.ca

Bayshore HealthCare has been enhancing the quality of life, dignity and independence of Canadians in their homes since 1966. Offering a wide range of personal, home and community health care services through more than 60 home care offices and 60 community care clinics across Canada, we strive to make a difference in our clients' lives – every visit, every time.

Sleep disorders

If you still struggle to get a good night's rest, or you don't feel rested and alert during the day, talk to your physician. They may want to evaluate you for these and other sleep disorders:

Sleep apnea

Breathing interruptions caused by repeated blocking of the upper airway. If not treated, sleep apnea can lead to complications such as heart attack, diabetes and other serious health conditions.

Periodic limb movements disorder (PLMD)

Repetitive movements, usually in the legs and feet, such as muscle twitches, limb jerks and flexing of the ankles, knees or hips. PLMD is not medically serious, but it can contribute to poor sleep and daytime fatigue.

Restless legs syndrome (RLS)

A sleep movement disorder that causes an individual to feel uncomfortable or unpleasant sensations in the legs, followed by an urge to move them. Untreated, RLS can lead to exhaustion and daytime sleepiness.

Bayshore is pleased to provide information that educates you as you strive to care for yourself or your loved ones. The information is not advice and should not be treated as such.

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