

Your doctor needs to know about your poor sleepⁱ

Sleep troubles are not a normal part of aging.ⁱⁱ But many people think that this problem is not worth raising with their doctor. However, there are many health risks and negative symptoms associated with persistent poor sleep.ⁱⁱⁱ

COMMON SYMPTOMS



DAY

Poor physical function^v
 Emotional health problems^v
 Poor mental health^v
 Poor social function^v
 Daytime fatigue^v



NIGHT

Trouble staying asleep or falling asleep^{vi}
 Not waking up when you want to^{vi}
 Not feeling refreshed after sleep^{vi}

MAJOR RISK* FACTORS

Sleep issues can increase the chances of developing:

Stroke^{iv}
 Chronic Pain^{iv}
 Dementia^{iv}
 Heart Disease^{iv}
 Parkinson's Disease^{iv}
 Type 2 Diabetes^{iv}

*According to research: AASM Morin CM, et al. Lancet. 2012; 379: 1129-41, Shekleton JA, et al. Sleep 2014; 37(1): 107-16

How to bring up sleep problems with your doctor

Persistent sleep issues may feel like a concern you can just 'add on' to another appointment, but this may result in an incomplete conversation. If possible, make a dedicated appointment to discuss your sleep.

It can be very helpful to bring physical documentation that details the nature of your sleep troubles. It will remind you to have the conversation, and it will demonstrate to your doctor that it is a serious concern. Visit screener.help2sleep.ca.



Be prepared for a conversation about sleep

Questions your doctor might ask you

How often do you exercise?
 What are your eating habits, especially before bed?
 Have you already tried some form of sleep management?
 How does sleeplessness affect your nights, and your days? How long has it been happening?

Questions you can ask your doctor

How many hours of sleep should I expect to get each night?
 What kind of management strategies should I consider?
 What are the latest kinds of treatment options available to me?
 How rested should I feel after a night's sleep?

Ensuring your sleep issues get prioritized

It is not always easy to have a conversation about sleeplessness. But remember: poor sleep impacts your health, and your health is of utmost importance.

To ensure your sleep issues are prioritized, you can **bring an advocate** to your appointment like a supportive family member or friend that understands your struggle with sleep. They can help reinforce that it needs to be a priority. Finally, do not be afraid to **seek a second opinion** to help get a broader perspective on how persistent sleeplessness impacts your life.

DID YOU KNOW?

The difference between: persistent sleeplessness & insomnia

The two terms actually mean the same thing. Health professionals will often use the term “insomnia” to describe issues with getting a regular night sleep.^{viii}

Many people think that insomnia means a complete lack of sleep for days on end. This is not true. If you have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep, it can be a form of insomnia even if it doesn't happen every day.^{ix} So don't be surprised if this term comes up in your discussion!



Common treatments to improve your sleep^{vii}

-  **Sleep hygiene**
Practices that can help improve sleep quality.
-  **Lifestyle changes**
Often related to diet, exercise, or stress management.
-  **Sleep study**
An overnight stay at a specialized clinic.
-  **Cognitive behavioural therapy for insomnia**
A discussion-based approach that may help you identify and address thoughts or behaviours related to your sleeplessness.
-  **Over-the-counter or prescription medication**
Your doctor can explain the effects of various pharmacological options for sleeplessness.

Learn more about sleeplessness with these resources:



Health Canada Sleep Guide

<https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/phac-aspc/images/services/publications/healthy-living/canadian-adults-getting-enough-sleep-infographic/64-03-18-2136-Sleep-Adults-Infographic-EN-Final-03.05.2019.jpg>



Guide: What Sleeping Better Feels Like

<https://depressionhurts.ca/en/mental-health-resources/what-sleeping-better-feels-like/>



Common Misconceptions around Sleep Issues

<https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/things-to-know-t-o/common-misconceptions-around-sleep-issues-1.6576544>

REFERENCES

ⁱWebMD, When to Call a Doctor About Sleep Disorders ⁱⁱHelpGuide.org, Sleep and Aging: Sleep Tips for Older Adults ⁱⁱⁱMayo Clinic, Insomnia- Symptoms and Causes ^{iv}National Library of Medicine, Neurobehavioral performance impairment in insomnia: relationships with self-reported sleep and daytime functioning ^vNational Library of Medicine, Neurobehavioral performance impairment in insomnia: relationships with self-reported sleep and daytime functioning ^{vi}Mayo Clinic, Insomnia- Symptoms and Causes ^{vii}Mayo Clinic, Insomnia- Diagnosis and Treatment ^{viii}National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, What Is Insomnia? ^{ix}National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, What Is Insomnia?