



5 Sleep Disorders

Disorders Related to Aging

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Take our free sleep apnea quiz at www.kansassleep.com
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As you age, your body's ability to handle medications changes, making it more likely that those medications can affect your sleep or alertness levels during the day. Certain sleep disorders are more common in older individuals:

Insomnia is the most common sleep disorder and has various causes, including medical illnesses, medications and other sleep disorders. Changes in living situations or the loss of a spouse, close friend or other family member can trigger insomnia. Hospitalization, recovery after an operation or traveling can disrupt sleep and even lead to long term insomnia. A change in your daily routine, such as retirement, often affects your sleeping patterns. Serious concerns about finances or end-of-life issues can also disrupt your ability to sleep.

Advanced sleep phase syndrome occurs when you experience a shift in sleep patterns that causes you to go to bed earlier and get up earlier. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but it might not be desirable. It can be frustrating to be awake early in the morning while others are still sleeping. It can also be difficult to stay awake later in the evening when you want to take part in social activities.

Sleep apnea occurs when your throat briefly collapses during sleep, making it difficult to breathe. You may not be aware of this disruption because it only occurs while you are sleeping. A spouse or bed partner might notice regular snoring or observed pauses in breathing during sleep. This disorder can cause sleepiness during the daytime and dozing off when you would normally be awake. Some patients with sleep apnea wake with headaches or have insomnia, night sweats, nighttime heartburn, memory problems, difficulty concentrating, irritability or low sex drive. Sleep apnea can also increase your risk of high blood pressure, heart attack, irregular heart rhythm or stroke.

Restless legs syndrome is a neurological condition that can disrupt sleep and is more common in older patients. It results in a strong urge to move your legs, especially in the evening. Moving your legs can temporarily relieve your discomfort. Sometimes, this disorder is brought on or made worse by certain medical conditions or medications.

Sleepwalking can occur at any age, but certain types of sleepwalking disorders occur more commonly as you age. Some neurological disorders or medications can contribute to sleepwalking in older individuals.

Since it can be difficult to tell if you are experiencing changes in sleep because of normal aging or because of another sleep disorder, we recommend you talk to your primary care doctor about any symptoms you are having. Your doctor can help you decide if seeing a sleep disorders specialist would be beneficial.

