

# Sleep Needs After 60: What Really Matters

Sleep often changes with age, but the need for sleep does not disappear. Many older adults assume lighter or shorter sleep is inevitable. In reality, most adults—regardless of age—still require 7–8 hours of sleep per night. What changes is how easily that sleep is achieved and how restorative it feels.

## How Sleep Changes as We Age

As we get older, normal biological changes affect sleep:

- ✓ Less deep sleep, which is important for physical recovery
- ✓ More nighttime awakenings, often from noise, light, pain, or bathroom needs
- ✓ Earlier sleep and wake times due to shifts in the body's internal clock

These changes can make sleep feel less refreshing, even when time in bed is adequate.

## What Counts as “Good Sleep” for Older Adults

Good sleep is not defined by sleeping straight through the night. Healthy sleep typically includes:

- Falling asleep within 20–30 minutes
- Sleeping a total of 7–8 hours (including brief awakenings)
- Being able to return to sleep after waking
- Feeling reasonably rested most mornings
- Maintaining consistent sleep and wake times

Occasional poor nights are normal. Persistent problems are not.



## How to Know If You’re Getting Enough Quality Sleep

Signs that sleep is likely supporting your health include:



Stable daytime energy without frequent naps



Clear thinking and attention during the day



Stable mood and emotional resilience



No regular reliance on sleep medications

Possible signs sleep is insufficient or poor quality include:



Ongoing daytime fatigue or sleepiness



Memory issues or mental fog



Irritability or low mood



Frequent nighttime awakenings with difficulty returning to sleep



## Supporting Healthy Sleep as You Age



Helpful habits include:

- Consistent bed and wake times
- Daytime light exposure and regular movement
- Limiting caffeine, alcohol, and screens in the evening
- A cool, dark, quiet sleep environment

Aging may change how sleep feels, but chronic poor sleep is not normal. Understanding what good sleep looks like—and paying attention to how you feel during the day—can help older adults protect energy, brain health, and long-term independence.