

Struggling with Sleep?

by Robin McMilin, LCSW



Everyone experiences an occasional restless night, but for those who toss and turn regularly, the inability to sleep can be a source of intense frustration. Difficulty falling asleep and/or staying asleep, a disorder known as insomnia, is more prevalent than people may realize. Insomnia for seniors is even more common, affecting almost 50% of adults 60 and older, according to the National Institute of Health.

Insomnia can be caused by health issues, concerns of aging, anxiety, depression and even medication. Frequent urination and pain from arthritis or other conditions that are common in older adults can also interrupt sleep. Add to that movement and sleep disorders, such as restless leg syndrome, snoring and sleep apnea, and it is no surprise that so many older adults struggle with getting the rest their bodies need.

If you or your family member is struggling with getting a good night's sleep, you might want to try the following:

- Maintain a regular wake-up time and a regular bedtime
- A light snack before going to sleep at night may be helpful. Many people find that warm milk increases sleepiness.
- Limit or eliminate alcohol, caffeine, and nicotine 1-2 hours before bedtime.
- Do NOT take naps during the day.
- Exercise daily but not immediately before bedtime.
- Avoid too much stimulation, such as violent TV shows or computer games, before sleep. Practice relaxation techniques at bedtime.
- If you cannot fall asleep after 20 minutes, get out of bed and do a quiet activity, such as reading or listening to music, but avoid bright light during these times.

If you try these various sleep hygiene methods, and still have insomnia, it is important that you seek medical help. A thorough examination by a qualified physician may be required to fully understand the root causes of your sleep disorder and to help find a solution.

If the root cause is anxiety or depression, call us at CJFS, as our experienced, licensed social workers can help. Contact Robin McMilin, LCSW at 205-879-3438, and she will arrange for you to meet with one of our social workers, all of whom accept Medicare.