

# A good night's sleep benefits cognition

Brought to you by GoCogno.com

## Sleep your way to better brain health

A lack of sleep can become a serious health concern, and that's particularly true for anyone who is concerned about brain health or experiencing cognitive decline.

Whether the problem is sleeplessness or a sleep disorder, if you're not getting a good night's sleep, that can contribute to memory loss and increase the risk of dementia. But here's the good news. Most causes of poor sleep are treatable, and if addressed, you can start sleeping soundly again.



---

*"Religiously, I get 7 to 8 hours of sleep, because if you don't, you might as well be smoking cigarettes or sitting on the couch eating two bags of potato chips a night. It's the same thing."* — **Dr. Rudolph Tanzi, Harvard Medical School**

### 3 key ways sleep benefits cognition

- Deep sleep, or what we call slow-wave sleep, is the only time your brain doesn't produce the amyloid that creates the plaques associated with Alzheimer's.
- Sleep also is the time during which a clear, clean solution recirculates through the brain, cleaning away toxins.
- Slow-wave sleep is when memories are shifted to brain regions where they become more stable.

### The sleep struggles of older adults

- A study done several years ago found 42% of people over the age of 65 reported some difficulty in falling asleep or staying asleep. The percentage is probably higher now because of the time spent staring at the screens of electronic devices, which can disrupt our rest.
- It's a misconception that older adults don't need as much sleep. At any age, we need to sleep 7 to 8 hours a night to be mentally and physically at our best.
- Difficulty sleeping is not an inevitable consequence of getting old. Most often, it's a result of factors that can be addressed.

(Continued on next page)

## Sleep and cognitive decline

- It's very common for MCI or Alzheimer's patients to have poor sleep patterns.
- But a serious memory problem doesn't automatically mean dementia. Other medical conditions can result in memory loss and some are sleep-related.
- Sleep apnea is a pernicious threat to brain health. It's common among older men and people who are overweight, and occurs when soft tissue at the back of the mouth and throat blocks the airway. People with sleep apnea often snore loudly and may wake up hundreds of times a night without realizing it.
- Someone who has a sleep breathing disorder is at risk of developing MCI more than a decade earlier than they would otherwise, research shows.
- Sleep apnea is treatable, and it's very important to address it.

## Common causes of sleep problems

According to MedLine Plus, the following are some of the most frequent reasons for an inability to sleep:

- Alcohol
- Chronic disease
- Medicines, herbs, supplements or recreational drugs
- Depression
- Lack of physical activity
- Pain caused by arthritis or other health problems
- Caffeine, nicotine or other stimulants

If you're having trouble sleeping, talk to your doctor. A physical exam can identify the cause of the problem, and the right way to deal with it.

Click here to read the full article in MedLine Plus: <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000064.htm>

## A word of warning about medications

Beware of sleep medications. They are all too easy to reach for, and they pose a serious risk to your cognition. According to BeBrainFit:

- Certain prescription medications and over the counter medications are notorious for causing memory loss.
- Prescription sleeping pills are among the greatest concerns.
- And it's not just prescription medications that can diminish your memory. A large study found that over-the-counter sleep aids significantly increase the risk for dementia.

Click here to read the full article on BeBrainFit: <https://bebrainfit.com/drugs-memory-loss/>

## 10 tips to secure a better night's sleep

- Get in some physical activity during the day. Exposure to sunlight in the morning also helps regulate your sleep cycle.
- Avoid eating or exercise in the last two to three hours before you go to bed.
- Don't drink coffee or other beverages with caffeine after mid-afternoon.
- Don't smoke. If you're a smoker, your body experiences nicotine withdrawal during the night, which interrupts your sleep.
- Darken your bedroom by closing the blinds, and set the room temperature so it's neither hot nor cold.
- Have a good bedtime routine. Try to get to bed and get up at the same time every day.
- Consider replacing your pillows and/or mattress if they've become uncomfortable to sleep on.
- Don't watch TV in bed, and don't have electronics (such as your phone) in the bedroom. Electronic devices emit a blue light that interferes with your ability to sleep.
- If you can't fall asleep, don't lay awake. Get out of bed, and then go back to bed later.
- If you're not sleeping well at night, try to avoid napping during the day.

## Recommended resources

You can learn more about sleep and sleep disorders by visiting the website of the American Sleep Association at [www.sleepassociation.org](http://www.sleepassociation.org)

The National Sleep Foundation also is an excellent resource, and you can learn more by checking out its website at [www.sleepfoundation.org](http://www.sleepfoundation.org)