

Steps to Living *Well*

Snooze your way to a younger brain! You probably don't need a study to tell you that not getting enough sleep can make it hard to think clearly and remember things. But research does show that sleep deprivation can affect cognition, and since your sleep patterns change and your risk of sleep problems increase as you get older, not getting enough shut-eye can aggravate age-related cognitive decline.

Another side effect of sleep deprivation is its link to depression. Unfortunately, older adults are more likely to experience both depression and sleep problems as they age. While researchers aren't sure if depression leads to sleep problems or vice versa, they do acknowledge that it's easy to get swept into their joint cycle. Improving sleep or treating depression can benefit both conditions and lead to better brain function.

If health problems are interfering with your sleep, there are some easy ways to ensure a good night's rest. Try going to bed at a consistent time and to help you nod off, dim the lights an hour before bedtime and transition to quiet activities like reading a book. Take a hot shower or bath before bed; the natural drop in your body temperature afterward will help you fall asleep. Avoid drinking alcohol or consuming caffeine for 3 to 4 hours before bed. Close your eyes quiet your mind take some slow deep breaths and enjoy sweet dreams!

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