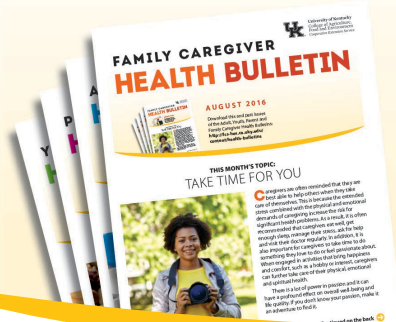


FAMILY CAREGIVER HEALTH BULLETIN



DECEMBER 2016

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<http://fcs-hes.ca.uky.edu/content/health-bulletins>

THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: CATCH YOUR ZZZZZS



A good night's sleep is a basic human need. It is equally important as nutrition and exercise, but the duties and routines of caregiving often interrupt sleep. Poor sleep increases the risk for health problems, including high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, obesity, stroke and dementia. Poor sleep also contributes to accidents and injuries. It has also been linked to moodiness, decreased productivity and trouble concentrating and making decisions. Especially when feeling exhausted, it is important to make sleep a priority.

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Regular physical activity and exercise, including fresh air, can help you sleep better.

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To help you find time to sleep, Caregivers.com of Texas makes these recommendations:

- **Stay connected.** Talk with people who are going through something similar as you, such as in a support group.
- **Seek respite.** There are volunteers and paid personnel who can watch over your loved one or stay in your home so that you can have time to yourself, your family and/or to temporarily get away for a re-boot.
- **Install home safety features.** If your loved one wanders at night due to dementia or leaves stove tops or ovens on during the day, there are home adaptations that can be made to help keep loved ones safer and more independent.
- **Visit a healthcare professional.** You may have a sleep disorder that needs to be diagnosed.
- **Exercise.** Regular physical activity and exercise, including fresh air, can help you sleep better.
- **Relax.** Find ways to sit still and focus on the present, even if only for a few minutes.
- **Avoid late-day caffeine.** Skip late day caffeine and go for a walk instead.
- **Take naps.** Take advantage of when your loved one rests. On some days, you may use this time to catch up, but when you can, use that downtime to catch a few power Zzzzzs yourself.
- **Maintain a routine.** Going to bed and getting up at the same time every day is good for our circadian timer (the sleep clock in our brains).
- **Skip the bedtime snack.** Meals and snacks before bed can cause you to keep awake.

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- **Avoid blue light.** Smart phones, computers and televisions can prevent you from feeling sleepy. When possible, avoid electronics up to three hours before bedtime and sleep in a dark room.
- **Ask for help.** Whether you seek paid or non-paid caregiving/companion services, respite care or long term care services, there is no shame in asking for and relying on outside help.

If you are having trouble sleeping, talk with your healthcare professional. The National Institutes of Health have also published a free booklet, "Your Guide to Healthy Sleep," which can be downloaded at https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/files/docs/public/sleep/healthy_sleep.pdf

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