

Ask our physicians

Are there steps menopausal women can take for more restful sleep?



Eleanor P. Moresco, MD, Internal Medicine, Hallmark Health Medical Associates, Inc.

Many women experience changes in their sleep patterns during menopause. Hot flashes, sleep disturbance and joint pain are some of the most common menopausal complaints. Occasionally disturbed sleep is related to uncomfortable hot flashes, which then become the major focus of treatment. Some women have reduced hot flashes with certain herbs, anti-depressant and blood pressure medications. I try to reassure my patients that the total number of hours of continuous sleep is not that important. It is more important to get a few hours of restful sleep each night. Allowing the body to relax and drift in and out of sleep for the remainder of the night can also be restorative. The key is to stay relaxed and not worry that you are not in deep sleep. Worrying can put the body in a stressful state that inhibits sleep. There are herbal supplements such as valerian root that are available over the counter. Another natural sleep supplement is magnesium. Speak with your physician before using these. If your sleep disturbance is part of a general depression or anxiety that can develop during menopause, then often treating the mood issue will help improve sleep. Always ask for a sleep aid that is not habit forming. Sleep aids work best when taken about an hour before bedtime. Most importantly, get some exercise each day to relieve mental and physical stress. Also, limit caffeine to one serving a day in the morning and avoid fluid intake during evening hours.

What are the steps to take for good health in the warmer weather?



Thomas Byrne, MD, Medical Director, Hallmark Health Medical Associates, Inc.

Before heading out into the yard to take care of outdoor chores, cover up with long sleeves, long pants, a wide brimmed hat, sunglasses and sunscreen with a minimum SPF of 30 to protect your skin from sun damage. Covering up also helps to prevent bug bites and insect-borne illness like Lyme Disease, Eastern Equine Encephalitis and West Nile Virus. If you're going to be doing yard work, wear gloves to prevent scrapes, cuts, punctures, blisters and poison ivy rashes. Back pain is common this time of year especially with gardening and clearing debris from your yard.

Remember to start slowly and lift with your legs while keeping your head up and back straight. Also, none of us are as young as we used to be and getting injured can occur more frequently as we age. Before rushing out to do things, take your time and avoid injuries so that you can enjoy more of your spring and be ready for the warm summer months ahead. Maybe you are thinking about starting to exercise this spring. Before you begin any vigorous activity, consider seeing your doctor for a checkup, especially if you have a history of diabetes or if you are a male 45 or older or a female 55 or older.

What are the causes and cures for fatigue in adults?



Kristyn Newhall, MD, Family Medicine, Hallmark Health Medical Associates, Inc.

Many people we see in the office report feeling low on energy. The most common causes of fatigue are lifestyle related. Fortunately, with a little effort, you can change some of the habits that may be contributing to your fatigue.

- Not enough sleep: Many people get less sleep than they need.
- Not enough exercise: Exercise gives you more energy. People who exercise regularly experience less fatigue than people who are inactive. Go for a 10 minute walk at lunch. Take the dog for a 10 minute run after work. It's spring, a good time to get moving!
- Not eating the right food: Caffeine and sugar are the first things we reach for when we are tired, but they can actually increase fatigue. It is important to stay well hydrated with water and eat lots of fruits, vegetables and lean protein to maintain your energy level throughout the day. Bring healthy snacks to work to help fight the mid-day cravings that might contribute to fatigue. Try incorporating these healthy habits into your daily routine. If you are still experiencing fatigue despite these lifestyle changes or if you develop any other concerning symptoms, be sure to let your doctor know right away.