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## Encourage Your Older Relatives to Get a Good Night's Sleep

Few things in life are as eagerly anticipated as a good night's sleep. However, many older people find that bedtime is the hardest part of their day. Though sleep patterns change as we age, sleep that is disturbed and unrefreshing is not an inevitable part of aging. In fact, troubled sleep may be a sign of emotional or physical disorders and should be carefully evaluated by a doctor or a sleep specialist.

Getting a good night's sleep can make a big difference in your elderly relative's quality of life. Here are some suggestions to help them get a good night's sleep:

- Make sure your loved one is following a regular schedule. Check to see if they are going to sleep and getting up at the same time each day.
- Make sure they are getting some exposure to natural light in the afternoon. This will help adjust their internal sleep clock.
- Make sure they are conscious of what they are eating. Elderly relatives should avoid drinking caffeinated beverages, as caffeine is a stimulant which can keep them awake. If they like snacks before bed, a glass of warm milk may help.
- Make sure they aren't drinking alcohol or smoking cigarettes to help them sleep. Drinking even small amounts of alcohol can make it hard to stay asleep. Smoking is not only dangerous, but nicotine is a stimulant.
- Make sure they have a safe and comfortable sleeping environment. In addition, the room should be dark, well-ventilated, and have all nonessential sounds blocked out.
- Make sure they develop a bedtime routine. Routines tell your body that it's time to wind down. Some people watch the evening news, read a book, or soak in a warm bath.
- Make sure they only use their bedroom for sleeping. If they have difficulty falling asleep, they should get up and go into another room until they feel sleepy again.