



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Do Not Lose Sleep Worrying About Insomnia**

**(Malden, MA)**—There's nothing quite as frustrating as not being able to get to sleep and stay asleep. Insomnia happens to most people at one time or another in their life but is more common in older adults.

Insomnia is the most prevalent type of sleeping problem in elders. With insomnia, people have trouble falling asleep and staying asleep. Some issues that lead to insomnia include worrying about certain things that makes your mind rave or taking any new medication (over the counter or prescription) that may be causing side effects. Sleep apnea is another issue. When an individual suffers from sleep apnea, he or she stops breathing momentarily while sleeping and subsequently wakes up after each cessation. Movement disorders, such as Restless Leg Syndrome and Periodic Limb Movement Disorder, are other causes of sleeplessness. Such conditions cause uncomfortable feelings in the legs that can lead to unsettled sleep.

The National Sleep Foundation states elderly people may also experience insomnia because of a change to their circadian rhythm. Our body has internal clock that gives us signals when it is time to go to bed. As we age, these circadian signals become less efficient which result in elderly people going to bed earlier and waking up earlier.

According to a publication by the National Institute on Aging, "A Good Night's Sleep," older adults should get 7-9 hours of sleep per night. Unfortunately, many elders don't get enough sleep for many reasons. People function better with the appropriate amount of sleep but when they go without sleep, they may be irritable, forgetful, depressed, and be more likely to have falls.

There are some steps older adults can take to help sleep better. Follow a regular schedule, going to bed at the same time each evening and waking at the same time each morning. Create a bedtime routine and follow it each night 30 minutes prior to going to bed. By doing

a routine regularly, your body will begin to know when it's time to sleep. Also, make sure the pillows and mattress are comfortable, exercise frequently, but avoid exercise three hours before bedtime, and be aware of when you eat. Eating a large meal close to bedtime can prevent you from sleeping well.

Most importantly, talk with a primary care physician to rule out any physical problems that may be causing the restless sleep patterns. Only a physician can diagnose some of the more serious causes of sleep disorders.

With a little work on your part and help from your doctor, you should be able to get a good night's sleep without counting sheep.

The first line of defense when it comes to how to treat insomnia in elderly adults is behavioral changes. This includes things such as:

- Limiting fluids up to 3 hours before bed
- Avoiding caffeine and/or tobacco
- Not having a large meal before bedtime
- Keeping your bedroom as dark as possible
- Only use your bed to sleep instead of laying on it to watch tv
- Doing what you can to reduce noise
- Being as active as possible during the day

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*Located in Malden, Mass., Mystic Valley Elder Services is a non-profit agency that provides essential home- and community-based care and resources to older adults, people living with disabilities, and caregivers who reside in Chelsea, Everett, Malden, Medford, Melrose, North Reading, Reading, Revere, Stoneham, Wakefield and Winthrop. Agency services include coordination of home care, transportation, Meals on Wheels, and information and referrals. For more information, please call (781) 324-7705 or visit [www.mves.org](http://www.mves.org).*