



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

World Association of Sleep Medicine

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MARCH 5, 2013 — Many older adults accept problems with their sleep as an inevitable part of aging. But what if sleep problems aren’t a natural part of getting older?

On Friday, March 15, 2013, World Sleep Day will be celebrated all over the globe. This annual event is a celebration of sleep and a call to action on important issues related to sleep.

This year’s theme is “Good Sleep, Healthy Aging,” which draws needed attention to common complaints of sleep disturbance in older adults. Getting a good night’s sleep is possible at any age — and is vitally important for overall health.

An epidemic?

According to recent research, approximately 50 percent of older adults report difficulty sleeping. But sleep problems in older adults are less a result of aging itself and more related to other conditions that may accompany aging.

Respiratory disorders, changes in circadian sleep cycles, medical and psychiatric illnesses, and increased medicine use all can contribute to poor quality sleep in this growing population.

Poor sleep doesn’t only mean that half of all older adults are a little more tired during the day, though. There are more serious consequences related to overall health and wellbeing. Sleep disturbances have been shown to contribute to decreased quality of life, more symptoms of depression and anxiety, slower reaction times, memory problems, issues with balance and vision increasing risk of falls, and even death.

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The good news

If you're an older adult, good quality sleep is within reach.

It might mean talking with your doctor about your medications, going to bed and waking up earlier because your body's circadian sleep cycles have shifted, or getting treatment for other conditions that are interfering with your sleep.

Some sleep disorders, such as insomnia and obstructive sleep apnea, are more common in the elderly. But with diagnosis and specialty care, these issues can also be treated and even prevented.

The truth is that in healthy older adults, sleep problems are rare.

If you or a loved one is struggling with sleep and have attributed it to aging, there is hope — and better health — by seeking treatment from your doctor or a sleep medicine specialist.

World Sleep Day 2013

World Sleep Day is organized by the World Association of Sleep Medicine (WASM), an international association whose mission is to advance sleep health worldwide.

This year, WASM wants to emphasize that good sleep is important at any age. They have partnered with Pampers to distribute "Golden Sleep Principles" under the theme "Care for Baby's Golden Sleep." Parents can encourage good sleep habits from birth — and give their babies the best environment for brain and body development — by following the principles. When babies sleep better, parents do, too. To learn more about the Golden Sleep Principles, go to <http://www.worldsleepday.org/golden-sleep-principles/>.

You can participate in World Sleep Day by becoming a delegate.

Last year, World Sleep Day delegates worked locally to spread awareness of sleep issues by translating World Sleep Day materials into other languages, making promotional videos, developing sleep conferences for the public, and sharing testimonies from people whose lives have changed with better sleep.

For more information on World Sleep Day, including additional media resources, go to www.worldsleepday.org.

References

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