

Is good sleep a blessing for ageing? (Week 4)

睡眠問題是年老的必然現象嗎？

Is sleep problem a part of ageing?

剔除謬誤。年老，睡個好覺，他們是相伴而來的嗎？


Putting myths to rest. Getting older and good sleep, do they go hand in hand?

每一個人都有一個內在的生理時鐘，使部分人成為「夜貓子」或「早起鳥」。我們的腦部有一個 24 小時晝夜的節律週期，控制著這個生理時鐘。這個週期影響我們何時起床、何時就寢。腦電波活動、荷爾蒙分泌、細胞再生及其他生理活動的模式，均與這 24 小時節律週期息息相關。生理時鐘是重要的指標，決定了睡眠模式，如每天該何時就寢與何時醒來。正常的生理時鐘，會根據每 24 小時的晝夜週期而設定和運作。

Each of us has an internal clock, which makes some people “night owls” or “early birds”. A process in the brain called circadian rhythm controls this. This process influences when we wake up and go to sleep. There are patterns of brain wave activity, hormone production, cell regeneration, and other biological activities linked to this 24-hour cycle. The circadian rhythm is important in determining sleeping patterns such as when we sleep and when we wake, every 24 hours. The normal circadian clock is set by the light-dark cycle over 24 hours.

睡眠問題並不是固有的年老過程。千萬不要把睡眠問題誤以為是年月增長的生理改變，如睡眠中經常甦醒和睡眠結構變化等。長者常有提前生理時鐘的傾向，就寢和起床的時間均提早了。雖然有些長者會抱怨晚間睡得不好，或因而影響日間的活力，有些長者卻假設這些困擾是年老過程中的正常現象。因此，對於每一名懷疑有睡眠困擾的長者，應該就其睡眠問題作評估，尤其針對睡眠窒息症、失眠，及其相關的日間活動能力等。適當時候更應該諮詢醫生的意見。然而，在使用藥物治理睡眠問題之前，非藥理策略更為安全。

Sleep problems are not an inherent part of the aging process. It is critical that sleep problems are not mistaken for physiologic changes in sleep-awake patterns and sleep architecture that occur throughout the lifespan. Older adults often display an advanced circadian tendency, having an earlier bedtime and an earlier wake-up time. Although some older adults complain of poor nighttime sleep or subsequent impairments in daytime functioning, others assume that their difficulties are part of the normal ageing process. Therefore, a focused evaluation of sleep, specifically sleep apnea and insomnia, and related daytime functioning should be performed in every older adult in whom sleep disturbances are suspected. When appropriate, a doctor should be consulted then. Nevertheless, non-pharmacological strategies are safer before resorting to medications in managing sleep problems.

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午睡的好與壞

The Pros and Cons of an Afternoon Nap

有時候長者因晚間睡眠質素不太好，而希望於下午小睡休息，補充精力。其實於午飯後小睡片刻，如十五分鐘可讓長者消除疲勞，繼續下午的活動。但過多午睡就會減低長者晚間的睡意，造成惡性循環。

Sometimes when older people have not slept well at night, they might want to take a short afternoon nap. A short nap of, for instance, 15 minutes can help the person recover their strength to continue with the activities in the afternoon. A prolonged afternoon nap, however, will reduce their readiness for sleeping at night and, thus, induce a vicious cycle.

以下章節將介紹基本的睡眠衛生及一些有實證支持可改善長者睡眠品質的方法。

The following section will introduce the basic sleep hygiene, and some of the empirically proven ways to effectively enhance the sleep quality of older people.

睡眠衛生

Sleep Hygiene

良好的睡眠衛生

Good Sleep Habits

幫助長者培養良好的睡眠衛生習慣，可以有助提升睡眠質素，尤其對於有認知障礙的長者，這些習慣更是可幫助入睡。這些包括：

Good sleep habits in older people can enhance their sleep quality. For those suffering from dementia, these habits can also help them initiate sleep:

- 定時就寢及起床，令生理時鐘穩定
Sleeping and rising at regular hours to keep a stable metabolic clock
- 床及睡房只用作休息用途
Using the bed and the bedroom for resting only
- 讓長者在晚間替換與日間不同的衣物，提示作息時間
Letting the older person dress in different clothing for the day and the night to underline the sleep-wake hours
- 建立每晚睡前常規性的活動，如播放特定的音樂、上廁所、塗抹潤手霜
Establishing the daily pre-sleep routines, such as playing specific music, going to the restroom, and applying hand cream
- 如長者於上床後30分鐘仍未能入睡，不需勉強留在床上，可讓長者先離開床去做一些輕鬆的事
The older person should not be forced to stay in bed if they cannot fall asleep after 30 minutes. They can be allowed to leave the bed and do something that is relaxing for them.

長者的作息需要

The Need for Rest of Older People

睡眠是一種能量保存和恢復狀態，有助於許多生理和心理功能的穩態。睡眠在保持健康、情感健康和清醒期間的神經認知表現方面發揮著積極而重要的作用。所以睡眠與長者的健康及安全是息息相關，長者或其照顧者面對的挑戰，是不容忽視。所以探究這些問題的背後原因，繼而「對症下藥」才是上策。近年來，人們一直強調生活方式的改變，以預防廣泛的疾病，促進一般健康。我們希望也能做出類似的努力，強調與睡眠有關的生活方式改變的重要性，這種生活方式不僅對我們的長者，而且對整個社會都能提高睡眠品質和睡眠量。


Sleep is a state of energy conservation and recovery that contributes to the homeostasis of many physiological and psychological functions. Sleep plays an active and important role in maintaining health, emotional well-being and neurocognitive performance during wakefulness. The health of older people is, in fact, closely related to their sleep. The challenge faced by older people and their carers in this aspect certainly deserves our attention. Investigating the factors that cause sleep disturbances might help us identify possible solutions or cures against it. Lifestyle changes have been emphasized in recent years to prevent a wide range of diseases and promote health in general. We hope that a similar effort will be made to stress the importance of sleep-related lifestyle changes that can improve both sleep quality and sleep quantity, not only for our seniors but also for society at large.

當有睡眠障礙時，首要是著重睡眠衛生及治療原因，安眠藥物則為輔助之用

When sleep disturbances occur, one should first focus on sleep hygiene and treat it according to its causes. The use of sleeping pills should be secondary to that.

以上有關睡眠衛生及促進酣睡小錦囊，不但在家居照顧者適用，也可作為院舍照顧者參考。

The above tips for sleep hygiene and enhancing sleep quality are not just applicable to family members who take care of older people at home, but also to health care workers at residential homes.

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