



## Sleep

**Poor sleep is not just tiredness. It changes everything.**

It affects your mood, your memory, your patience, and your physical health.

And yet, for many people in later life, a good night's sleep can feel like something that just... stopped happening.

The good news is that most sleep problems are not permanent, and they are not something you simply have to put up with.

### What Changes as We Age

Sleep does change as we get older, and understanding why can take away some of the frustration.

Our bodies produce less melatonin, the hormone that signals it's time to sleep. This means we may feel sleepy earlier in the evening and wake earlier in the morning.

We spend less time in deep, restorative sleep and more time in lighter sleep stages, which is why small sounds or a trip to the bathroom can wake us more easily.

Pain, medications, anxiety, and grief can all interfere with sleep as well. These are real and valid reasons, not excuses.

### Clearing Up Some Common Myths

MYTH	FACT
Older people need less sleep	We need the same amount - around 7 to 9 hours. We just find it harder to get.
Waking at night means poor sleep	Brief wakings are normal. It's the quality of your deep sleep that matters most.
A nightcap helps you sleep	Alcohol helps you fall asleep but disrupts your deep sleep cycles, leaving you more tired.
Lying in will catch up on lost sleep	Sleeping in disrupts your body clock and often makes the next night harder.



## Why Sleep Matters — The Science



During deep sleep, the brain does essential maintenance work.

- **It consolidates memories** - moving learning from short-term to long-term storage.
- **It clears out waste products** - including proteins linked to dementia risk.
- **It regulates cortisol** - the stress hormone. Poor sleep keeps cortisol elevated, which increases anxiety and inflammation.
- **It restores the immune system** - people who sleep less than six hours are significantly more susceptible to illness.
- **It supports heart health** - consistent poor sleep raises blood pressure and increases cardiovascular risk.

**Sleep is not laziness. It is essential maintenance.**

### What Actually Helps - Practical Steps

These strategies are drawn from sleep science and work particularly well for older adults.

#### Things to do

- **Keep a consistent wake-up time** even on weekends. This is the single most powerful thing you can do.
- **Get morning light** natural daylight within an hour of waking helps reset your body clock.
- **Keep the bedroom cool and dark** your body temperature needs to drop slightly to initiate sleep.
- **Wind down for 30 minutes before bed** calm activity, dim light, no screens.
- **If you can't sleep, get up** lying awake in bed teaches your brain to associate the bed with wakefulness.
- **Gentle movement during the day** even a short walk improves sleep quality significantly.

#### Things to Avoid

- **Caffeine after 2pm** your body takes 5 to 6 hours to clear it, so an afternoon coffee can still be disrupting your sleep at bedtime.
- **Long daytime naps** if you nap, keep it under 20 minutes and before 3pm.
- **Alcohol as a sleep aid** it fragments your sleep and reduces deep sleep quality.
- **Clock-watching** turn the clock away. Watching the time increases anxiety and makes sleep harder.
- **Screens in bed** the blue light suppresses melatonin and keeps the brain alert.
- **Lying in bed worrying** if your mind is racing, get up, write it down, and return when sleepy.

## Sleep and Your Club Life

Fatigue affects more than how we feel in the morning.

When we are consistently under-slept, we are less patient, more easily irritated, and less able to regulate our emotional responses. Small things feel bigger. Old frustrations resurface.

Good sleep is one of the quietest contributors to a more harmonious, connected, and engaged club.

If you notice a fellow member seems more irritable or withdrawn than usual, tiredness is often a factor worth considering with kindness.

### When to Talk to Your Doctor

Some sleep difficulties benefit from professional support. Please speak with your GP if you experience:

- Loud snoring or gasping during sleep (possible sleep apnoea — very treatable)
- Persistent insomnia lasting more than a month
- Extreme daytime sleepiness despite adequate time in bed
- Restless legs or unusual movements during sleep

### A Moment to Reflect

How would you describe your sleep at the moment?

Is there one habit - from the list above - you could try this week?

Is poor sleep affecting how you feel about your club, your relationships, or yourself?

***Even one small change, consistently practised, can make a real difference.***



### Thriving Members. Thriving Clubs.

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