



#### HEALTHY AGING

## Snoring as You Age

Snoring is a common problem that affects approximately 90 million American adults – 37 million on a regular basis. Persons most at risk are males and those who are overweight, but snoring is a problem of both genders. Snoring usually becomes more serious as people age. It can lead to fragmented and un-refreshing sleep which translates into poor daytime function.

There are several factors which facilitate snoring. First, the normal aging process leads to the relaxation of the throat muscles, thus resulting in snoring. Anatomical abnormalities of the nose and throat, such as enlarged tonsils or adenoids, nasal polyps, or deviated nasal septum cause exaggerated narrowing of the throat during sleep and thus lead to snoring. Functional abnormalities (e.g. inflammation of the nose and/or throat may occur during respiratory infection or during allergy season) will result in snoring. Sleep position, such as sleeping on your back, may lead to snoring in some people. Alcohol is a potent muscle relaxant and its ingestion in the evening will cause snoring. Muscle relaxants taken in the evening may lead to or worsen snoring in some individuals. One of the most important risk factors is obesity, and in particular having a lot of fatty tissue around the neck.

### Symptoms

People who snore make a vibrating, rattling, noisy sound while breathing during sleep. It may be a symptom of sleep apnea. Consult your doctor if you snore and have any of the following symptoms or signs:

- Excessive daytime sleepiness
- Morning headaches
- Recent weight gain
- Awakening in the morning not feeling rested
- Awakening at night feeling confused
- Change in your level of attention, concentration, or memory
- Observed pauses in breathing during sleep



### Treatment

If you have been told that your snoring is disturbing to others, or you have some of the symptoms and signs listed above, consult your doctor. You may be presented with a series of options to treat snoring. These will generally include:

- Lifestyle modification (i.e. avoidance of risk factors mentioned above)
- Surgery (generally on the back of the throat and roof of the mouth, or the nose if applicable)
- Appliances (mainly oral appliances constructed by a dentist experienced in treatment of snoring and sleep apnea)
- CPAP (a continuous positive airway pressure appliance which blows room air into the back of the throat thus preventing it from collapse)

Snoring and Sleep. Retrieved from <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/articles/snoring-and-sleep>



**AIR FORCE MEDICINE**  
TRUSTED CARE...ANYWHERE  
[WWW.AIRFORCEMEDICINE.AF.MIL](http://WWW.AIRFORCEMEDICINE.AF.MIL)

See calendar on other side to  
see what is going on this week

## Sleep Needs and Patterns

Along with the physical changes that occur as we get older, changes to our sleep patterns are a part of the normal aging process. As people age they tend to have a harder time falling asleep and more trouble staying asleep than when they were younger. It is a common misconception that sleep needs decline with age. In fact, research demonstrates that our sleep needs remain constant throughout adulthood.

So, what's keeping seniors awake? Changes in the patterns of our sleep occur as we age and this may contribute to sleep problems. Sleep occurs in multiple stages including dreamless periods of light and deep sleep, and occasional periods of active dreaming (REM sleep). The sleep cycle is repeated several times during the night and although total sleep time tends to remain constant, older people spend more time in the lighter stages of sleep than in deep sleep.

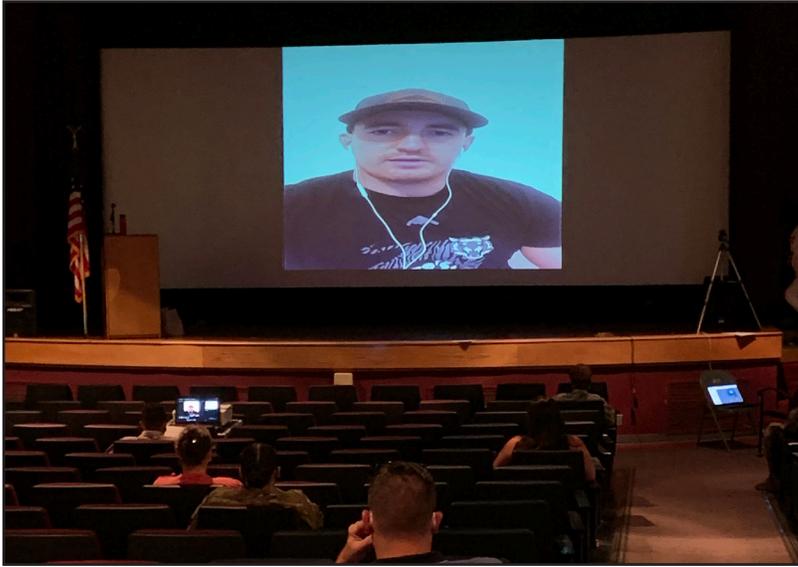
Many older adults also report being less satisfied with sleep and more tired during the day. Studies on the sleep habits of older Americans show an increase in the time it takes to fall asleep (sleep latency), an overall decline in REM sleep, and an increase in sleep fragmentation (waking up during the night) with age. The prevalence of sleep disorders also tends to increase with age. However, research suggests that much of the sleep disturbance among the elderly can be attributed to physical and psychiatric illnesses and the medications used to treat them.

Aging and Sleep. Retrieved from <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/articles/snoring-and-sleep>

## HeRO Spotlight: Whiteman Air Force Base Sleep Deprivation: The Truth



Whiteman Health Promotion held a virtual educational discussion where four professionals shared how sleep deprivation affected them and their goals. **Capt Joseph Sharp** spoke about being an avid athlete affecting his rest; **LTC (Col select) Maryanne Kiel** spoke on general health, family/spouse relationships, and the fear of making an error as a doctor; **LTC Christopher Button** related a story on how lack of sleep contributed to depression/alcoholism in one of his patients; and their Group Commander at the time, **Col Chrystal Henderson** talked about weight gain and then weight loss once she corrected her sleep pattern.



The full event can be found on Whiteman’s Facebook page:  
<https://www.facebook.com/Whiteman509MDG/videos/637219613840509/>

Got questions on other health issues related to sleep health, physical activity, tobacco, or nutrition? Share them with us and we will help you “Bust The Myths!” Send your questions to [usaf.jbsa.afmsa.mbx.hpo@mail.mil](mailto:usaf.jbsa.afmsa.mbx.hpo@mail.mil). Make sure to include in the subject line “Health Myth Buster.” For more online health tips visit the Air Force Health Promotion webpage <https://www.airforcemedicine.af.mil/Resources/Health-Promotion/>



@AF\_HealthPromotion\_HQ



@AirForce\_HP



Air Force Health Promotion HQ

### Community Events

HERE’S WHAT’S GOING ON WHERE YOU LIVE

Your Local Health Promotion Office



Contact:

Phone:

Email:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday