Many Causes for Poor Sleep

As people grow older, they have more and more problems with sleep. The problems commonly begin around age 40 and increase with age.

There are several significant causes of poor sleep in older people. One common cause is sleep apnea. Normally a person may have a few pauses in his breathing for up to 10 seconds while sleeping, but when it happens dozens to hundreds of times a night, a person does not get the rest that he needs. Sleep apnea is commonly associated with snoring.

Another problem that develops after age 40 is nocturnal myoclonus. With this, a person will have frequent violent kicking motions which disturb his normal sleep pattern and stages of sleep. Although the person may not be aware that he has such movements, his partner will certainly be aware of them.

Depression is another common cause of poor sleep. A person may fall asleep okay only to awaken in the middle of the night and not be able to sleep well after that. Antidepressants will work well for the depression as well as help with the sleep disturbance.

Alcohol is a depressant and tends to make people fall asleep, but it also interferes with the deeper stages of sleep and causes frequent awakenings during the night. Avoid alcohol if you have any difficulty sleeping.

Exercise is usually helpful in promoting good sleep but it should be done at least a few hours before going to bed. Stimulants, such as caffeine and decongestants, should be avoided in the latter half of the day. Sleeping pills should generally be avoided since they are effective for only short periods. If problems persist, a person should consult his physician for further evaluation.