

## THE WORD ON DRUGS

Older people are more likely to take a number of medications that may adversely affect sleep. Common medications, such as antidepressants (prescribed for depression) and antihypertensives (prescribed to control high blood pressure), may have a negative impact on sleep.

Caffeine taken too late in the day (in coffee, tea, soda, chocolate) may lengthen the amount of time it takes one to fall asleep. Alcohol may speed the onset of sleep, but leads to disrupted sleep later in the night.

Nicotine has been linked to sleep problems. In one study, smokers were much more likely than nonsmokers to report problems with daytime sleepiness and falling and staying asleep. Another study found that smokers are four times as likely to suffer from sleep apnea. Nicotine withdrawal can lead to these same problems on a short-term basis including increased awakenings along with a shorter period to fall asleep. Another study suggests that use of a skin nicotine patch may also be associated with early morning awakenings and reduced total REM sleep. Once the patch was removed, the length of time before REM sleep – and the percentage of REM sleep – was reduced.