



June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2014

## Help Seniors Stay Healthy

### Causes of Sleep Loss

Nocturia (the need to get up from sleep to urinate) can be a significant issue once you hit the age of 55 or so. It can lead to sleep deprivation and dangerous falls or injuries. The causes may be related to medical conditions (such as diabetes or urinary tract infections), medications and/or consuming liquids in the hours before bedtime, especially those with caffeine or alcohol. Work with your physician to identify the cause and address it before you experience a serious event.

It's easy to see how a sense of sleep deprivation leads to a demand for sleeping medications, however it is likely a better plan to attempt to manage the cause of sleep loss before resorting to drugs. Research from the United Kingdom has shown that the use of these medications, especially benzodiazepines (such as diazepam, temazepam) and hypnotics such as zopiclone, can lead to a three-fold increase in the risk of dying prematurely.

### Prevent Falls; Stay Healthy!

Significant morbidity and mortality are associated with falls by the elderly. A seemingly inconsequential tumble can result in a hip fracture and loss of independence. New guidelines published in the Journal of the American Geriatrics Society are including sufficient Vitamin D intake to help prevent falls. Vitamin D contributes to bone strength and density (along with calcium), but also seems to improve muscle strength which can reduce the risk of a fall.

Since falls in the elderly (or those with osteoporosis) can be so devastating, it's a good idea to take a hard look at your environment and make whatever changes you can to minimize the risk. Keep your floors illuminated and free of clutter, cords/wires and loose rugs and clean up spills immediately. Wear rubber-soled shoes for traction and keep things you use within reach. Pay attention to where pets are and use grab bars and skid-free mats in the bathroom.

June is Seniors Month – and seniors are some of our very most favourite people! There are lots of things seniors can do to still be getting the most out of life. Talk to your pharmacist for more tips and advice.