



According to the National Sleep Foundation, changes in sleep patterns are a part of the aging process. Many people experience difficulty falling asleep and then staying asleep as they age, and that difficulty can make men and women over 50 feel more tired during the day.

But even though difficulty sleeping may be a part of aging, that does not

mean men and women over 50 cannot take steps to improve their sleeping patterns. For example, certain snack foods may help to improve quality of sleep, especially when these foods replace less healthy snacking options. While men and women over 50 should always consult with their physicians before making any changes to their diets, the AARP notes that the follow-

Snack foods that promote better sleep

- ing are a handful of snack foods that promote better sleep.
- Almonds:** Magnesium is a mineral with muscle-relaxing properties, and almonds contain enough magnesium to help men and women get a better night's sleep. A small amount of almonds before bed might be enough to make falling and staying asleep easier.
- Bananas:** Much like almonds, bananas provide a substantial amount of magnesium. Bananas also contain the amino acid tryptophan, which many people associate with Thanksgiving turkey. While tryptophan might be most often associated with the sleepiness people feel after eating a holiday meal, it also has been linked to better sleep quality, so a banana shortly before bed might be just what you need to fall and stay asleep.
- Cheese and crackers:** One more traditional snack may just help you get a better night's sleep. Cheese and crackers contain tryptophan and carbohydrates, which can induce a better night's sleep and help you fall asleep sooner.
- Cherries:** Cherries contain the sleep hormone melatonin, and the AARP notes that recent studies indicated that
- participants who drank tart cherry juice on a daily basis fell asleep more quickly and slept longer and better than participants who did not.
- Hummus:** The primary ingredient in hummus is chickpeas, which are loaded with tryptophan, folate and vitamin B6. Folate has proven especially beneficial to older men and women who need help regulating their sleep patterns, while vitamin B6 helps the body regulate its clock.
- Peanut butter:** Peanut butter is another snacking item loaded with tryptophan. Spread some peanut butter on a carbohydrate, whether it's a slice of toast or some crackers, before going to bed, and you may enjoy a better, longer sleep.
- Walnuts:** Like cherries, walnuts contain melatonin, which can contribute to a longer, more restful night's sleep. Walnuts also can help regulate stress, which is a leading cause of sleeping difficulty.
- Many men and women experience difficulty sleeping as they age. But the right foods may just help combat such problems and help men and women get a more adequatenight's sleep.

Shedding pounds after 50

Muscle-strengthening activities, including yoga, can help men and women over 50 lose weight and keep the weight off.

- Diet**
- Men and women need fewer calories as they age. For example, men and women in their 40s may need as many as 200 calories more per day than they will when they reach their 50s. Counting calories might seem difficult, so men and women in their 50s and older who don't think they can count calories can try to eat more low-calorie foods like fruits, vegetables and whole grains.
- Consuming fewer calories often requires changing dietary habits, not only with regard to what you're eating but also how you're eating and even how you shop for food. Men and women used to dining out for lunch every day can start bringing their own lunches so they can gain greater control of their daily caloric intake. For those who find they're frequently too exhausted to cook each night, they can prepare meals in advance to have healthy, homemade meals waiting instead of always ordering takeout or delivery. When shopping for food, people should avoid doing so on an empty stomach so they're less inclined to buy unhealthy snacks.
- Exercise**
- Exercise is another essential component to shedding pounds after 50, though men and women over 50 should always consult a physician before they begin a new exercise regimen. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention points out that regular exercise can help older men and women prevent the onset of a host of



- ailments, including heart disease and diabetes. In addition, the CDC notes that regular physical activity as one ages helps muscles grow stronger, which increases the chances that an individual will be able to perform necessary daily activities without the assistance of others. Maintaining that independence into older adulthood is a goal for many men and women, and it's a goal that's far more realistic for men and women who exercise than it is for those who don't.
- When coupled with a healthy, low-calorie diet, routine exercise can help
- men and women over 50 shed extra weight and keep the weight off once it's gone. According to the CDC, older adults need at least 2 hours and 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity, such as brisk walking, every week and muscle-strengthening activities on 2 more days a week. These muscle-strengthening activities should work all the major muscle groups, including the legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms. Muscle-strengthening activities include lifting weights, working out with resistance bands, exercise such as push-ups and sit-ups that use body weight for resistance, and yoga. Even gardening that involves digging and shoveling can be considered a muscle-strengthening activity.
- Weight gain is often an expected side effect of aging. But men and women don't have to gain weight as they get older. Some simple dietary changes and a commitment to routine exercise is all it takes to shed weight after 50 and keep that weight off once it's gone.



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