

## Factors to Consider When Evaluating Sleep Problems in the Elderly

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Is the patient's complaint predominantly excessive sleepiness, inability to go to sleep at a desired time, early-morning awakening or a combination of these features?

Is total sleep insufficient and is sleep attempted at times that are not synchronous with the patient's circadian rhythm?

Are stressors or environmental factors influencing the sleep-wake cycle, such as a barking dog, ringing telephone, too much light or uncomfortable temperature in the bedroom?

Is an underlying medical or psychiatric illness contributing to the sleep disturbance?

Are stimulating or sedating effects of substances such as caffeine, alcohol and over-the-counter or prescription drugs playing a role in the patient's sleep problems?

Does the patient have a primary sleep disorder, such as sleep apnea, restless legs syndrome or periodic limb movements?

Are poor sleep habits, such as activity other than sleep in bed, irregular sleep-wake times or daytime napping, perpetuating the patient's symptoms?

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