Are You Listening to Your Body?

5 key signals for optimal health

by EarlySense (Paid Content)  |  Comments 0

Did you know that older adults are more conscious about their health than their generation’s? It’s true. And one of the secrets to better health is listening to what your body is telling you — literally. The best time to do that is when you sleep. Sleep is the window to your health. These five signals you should listen to and why.

1. Your Heart Rate

According to the American Heart Association®, the average resting heart rate is between 60 and 100 beats per minute, depending on your age, gender, and overall health. Heart rate is also referred to as “pulse rate” and one of your vital signs, along with respiratory rate and body temperature. Your doctor can tell you what your target heart rate should be for your age and medical condition.

- What your body is telling you: Monitoring your heart rate while you sleep is one of the most accurate indicators of overall cardiac health. A sudden increase in heart rate can indicate an underlying illness. And when you improve your overall fitness, you should see your resting heart rate decrease. For anyone taking blood pressure medications and trying to prevent heart disease, monitoring your heart rate and watching for changes will help you and your doctor take appropriate action.

2. Your Respiratory Rate

When you breathe, your body takes in oxygen necessary for life. Breathing is part of respiration. The average adult breathes 12 to 20 breaths per minute when resting/breathing. Your respiratory rate is another vital sign in detecting or monitoring medical conditions, and is often measured when your body is at rest.

- What your body is telling you: Monitoring your respiratory rate during sleep provides an excellent view of your respiratory system health and stability. A sudden increase could indicate an underlying condition, such as asthma or sleep apnea. A sudden change can indicate it’s time to use an inhaler or use a device. People with respiratory conditions who monitor their breath while they sleep are able to watch for signs that respiratory interventions improve when they follow their doctor’s orders.

3. Your Stress Level

During this life stage, adults 50+ experience many changes in everything from finances to relationships. Stress can have an overall effect on your health, including the increased likelihood of a bedtime sleep.

- What your body is telling you: Daily stress levels can be effective when you are at rest or sleep well. You know your body needs sleep and whether you should incorporate a plan to help reduce stress. This might include activities such as taking a 10-minute walk, meditating, or listening to music. When you monitor stress during your sleep, you can watch your stress levels go down when you incorporate appropriate personalized techniques to help your stress levels.
respiratory rate is another vital sign useful in detecting or monitoring medical conditions, and it is best measured when your body is at rest.

- **What your body is telling you:** Monitoring your respiratory rate during sleep provides an excellent view of your respiratory system health and stability. A sudden increase could indicate an upcoming cold, allergies, or a respiratory infection. And for someone with a more serious respiratory condition like asthma or COPD, a sudden change can reemphasize the need to use an inhaler or see a doctor. People with respiratory conditions who monitor their breathing while they sleep are able to watch as their respiratory rate improves when they follow their doctor's orders.

3. **Your Stress Level**
During this stage, your body and mind experience many changes in everything from hormones to relationships. Stress can also have an even more direct effect on your health, including the increased likelihood of a bad night's sleep.

- **What your body is telling you:** Daily stress level readings collected when you are at rest or sleep will help you understand how you are and whether you should incorporate a plan to help reduce stress throughout the day. This might include activities such as taking a 15-minute walk, meditating, or listening to calming music. When you monitor stress during your sleep every night, you can watch for stress levels up when you incorporate appropriate personalized techniques to help your stress levels.

4. **Your Sleep Time**
Most adults over 50 recognize the importance of sleep and its benefits; however, according to an AARP Sleep and Brain Health Survey, many participants do not understand the connection between REM (rapid eye movement) sleep (and cognitive ability). REM occurs later in our sleep cycle and is the time when you dream. This is important because during REM your brain processes your memories and new information.

- **What your body is telling you:** Optimal total sleep times range from 7 to 9 hours per night. Scientific research shows that 20% to 25% of normal sleepers should spend REM sleep in your normal memory and focus. Brain research has shown that for adults over 50, for improved cognitive ability, increase your REM by simply sleeping longer. When you monitor your sleep, your sleep cycle patterns are revealed and you'll be able to track your REM sleep time. If changes are necessary, there are simple tips you can follow to help ease a better and longer nights' sleep, including going to bed at a consistent time each night or keeping your room reasonably cooler.

5. **Your Sleep Quality**
The data is out there – sleep is important in numerous ways. Your heart and respiratory rate, stress levels, and sleep time all provide key information to evaluate your quality of sleep. The goal is to get to know what your body is doing for you and what the point of your body's signals will help you make necessary improvements.

- **What your body is telling you:** Twenty-five percent of men over age 50 experience breathing interruptions during sleep, and all of them don’t even know it. Breathing interruptions can only be detected when you monitor your sleep. You can identify breathing interruptions by monitoring and recording your breathing during sleep. The resulting information could also indicate that you require testing for sleep apnea, and should consult with your doctor.

The body is an amazing machine, and how it is helping you and you in general. Having the knowledge collected during sleep monitoring allows you to create a plan to improve your overall health. It's powerful.

See how EarlySense LIVE can help you decode the signals your body is telling you.