

Lifestyle

Insomnia Keeps Older Couples Apart

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April 11, 2020 08:43

More and more Koreans are becoming insomniac, and the problem is having a serious impact on their lifestyle.

According to the National Health Insurance Service, the number of patients with sleep disorders rose from 655,695 in 2013 to 914,049 in 2018, while related medical expenses more than doubled from W52.9 billion to W110.2 billion (US\$1=W1,212).

Sales of sleeping aids have surged over the last two or three years, with the market increasing six-fold from W500 billion in 2012 to more than W3 trillion last year.

Many couples now sleep in separate rooms to get a good night's rest. One 65-year-old housewife has been sleeping in a different room from her husband for 10 years because of marital problems but because of his snoring, especially when he has been drinking.



The couple opted for separate bedrooms when they moved into their current home 10 years ago. "I've always been a light sleeper, and I've been feeling much better since we've been sleeping in separate rooms," she said. "My husband says he's now used to sleeping alone."

Han Jin-kyu at Seoul Sleep Center said a growing number of middle-aged and elderly couples in Korea sleep in separate rooms, but he does not recommend it.

"Most people with sleep disorders develop circulatory or nerve-related problems as they age," Han said. "They could stop breathing while sleeping and in the worst case, it's good to have someone else in the same room."

Han recommends setting up two single beds in the same room for couples who are thinking about using separate rooms. But what about snoring? Han said people who snore particularly loudly should get medical help instead of sleeping in a separate room.