

Sleep, Obesity and How They Are Related

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The value of a good night's sleep is priceless!

Why is sleep important?

Sleep is a restorative process for the brain and is required for the health of the entire body. Poor sleep quality, which leads to overall sleep loss, has become a frequent complaint among patients.

Sleep disorders are some of the most commonly encountered problems in clinical practice. Sleeping seven to eight hours at a time is critical to good health.

Sleep deprivation has long been linked to an increased risk of becoming overweight or obese.

Researchers found that getting less than seven hours of sleep resulted in weight changes and may lead to weight gain, either by increasing food intake or decreasing energy burned.

The link between weight and sleep

Calorie reduction and exercise are **both** very important for weight loss and weight maintenance but sleep also needs to be considered. Even when cutting calories helps people lose weight, if they don't get enough sleep they may have a harder time getting rid of excess body fat. Sleep is the "most sedentary activity" yet may be an activity that protects from weight gain.

Sleep deprivation can increase your caloric intake by increasing late-night snacking, portion sizes, and the time available to eat. It can also affect your self-control in terms of portion sizes.

Effects of lack of sleep:

A hormone imbalance in the body that promotes overeating and weight gain. Leptin and ghrelin are hormones that regulate appetite, and when you aren't getting sufficient sleep, the production of these hormones is altered in a way that creates increased feelings of hunger. Increased hunger tends to lead to increasing calories and weight gain.

Daytime fatigue, making you less likely and less motivated to exercise. In addition, you're more likely to get tired sooner during physical activity. Lack of sleep may decrease your exercise motivation and performance as well.

A change to your energy balance, by decreasing both exercise and non-exercise energy expenditure.

Sleepiness and fatigue may increase sedentary behavior and therefore decrease exercise and the amount of energy expended.

The way your brain works. It may make it harder to make healthy choices and resist temptations. Sleep deprivation dulls activity in the frontal lobe of the brain. The frontal lobe oversees decision-making and self-control. Poor sleep can decrease your self-control and decision-making abilities and can increase the brain's reaction to food. Poor sleep can increase your appetite and has also been linked to increased intake of foods high in calories, fats, and carbs. When you are chronically fatigued or tired, you tend to crave sweets. This is because your body and mind need a stimulant to keep you alert and awake. What you might need most is a restful nap!

A decrease in your resting metabolism and the energy you burn. Less calories burned can lead to weight gain.

Obesity and sleep issues

A concern for individuals with obesity is that not only does sleep loss lead to weight gain, but being overweight also causes sleep issues, which can in turn worsen biological processes that contribute to weight gain. It is a frustrating cycle!

Researchers suggest that obesity may change metabolism and/or sleep-wake cycles in such a way that causes sleep quality to deteriorate. It's also possible that there are physical effects of carrying excess weight itself which impact sleep quality.

Overweight patients may encounter the following sleep disorders:

Obstructive Sleep Apnea

Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease

Depression

Anxiety

Insomnia

Asthma

Osteoarthritis

How to get a good night of sleep

Stick to a sleep schedule so you will always get the sleep you need.

Pay attention to what you eat and drink – a light snack is good, however avoid heavy eating, nicotine,

caffeine, and alcohol before bed.

Create a restful environment – a cool, dark, quiet setting is best.

Limit daytime naps to 30 minutes or less.

Include physical activity in your daily routine - regular physical activity can promote better sleep.

Manage worries with stress management techniques such as jotting down your concerns, meditating, and practicing deep breathing.

Avoid things that stimulate your brain, such as phone, TV, tablet, and computer screens for at least 30 minutes before bed

Along with eating right and exercising, good quality sleep is an important part of weight maintenance and your overall health. Poor sleep alters the way your body responds to food.

Learning good sleep hygiene can help you in your search for better sleep and weight management! If you're sleeping well but still need help managing your weight, we can help you.

About the Author:

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