- Sleep / Body weight

Sleeping more aids weight loss, study shows

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LOSING weight isn't suitable for everyone, and it doesn't always mean better health. It has always been about maintaining a healthy relationship with your body and forming lifelong healthy and sustainable habits.

For those who have been advised by their doctor [the need] to shed off pounds, a good night's sleep may just help you in your weight loss journey. Couple this with appropriate diet and exercise, and you're slowly on your way to better health. Your goal then should be making this your new lifestyle.

The Sleep Foundation, a website licensed by the National Sleep Foundation in the USA that aims to be the go-to source for trustworthy sleep information, has been publishing extensive articles based on sleep science, as well as comprehensive reviews of different sleep. In one of its articles, Sleep Foundation stressed the importance of getting adequate and quality sleep as an integral part of a healthy weight loss plan. Research has shown that losing sleep while dieting can reduce the amount of weight loss and even encourage overeating. In addition, studies have suggested that poor quality of sleep can lead to metabolic disorders, weight gain, and an increased risk of obesity and other chronic heart conditions.

We often hear, and in fact, experts in this field recommend an eight-hour uninterrupted sleep each night. Generally, seven to nine hours of sleep for adults each night is ideal. I usually get six to seven hours of sleep, however, I don't feel guilty for an extra hour or two of sleep, especially on days I need it the most.

Another study suggests that an extra hour of sleep every night could help sleep-deprived overweight individuals eat fewer calories per day without even trying. In this new study published last February 7 in the journal JAMA Internal Medicine, participants (who were asked to not restrict calories) were unaware that calorie intake was being measured for the trial.

The analysis, done through urine samples, translated to nearly nine pounds of weight loss over a year. This study, according to the researchers, is significant for people in weight loss programs.

There are also other studies that connect sleep with eating patterns. Experts said that adequate sleep helps people stick to a healthy diet—in terms of quantity and quality of calories consumed.

Often, we think that appetite is simply a matter of our grumbling stomach, seemingly asking for food. However, it's actually controlled by neurotransmitters, which act as chemical messengers allowing nerve cells to communicate to one another. In this sense, the phrase "it's all in the head" can apply here.

Lack of sleep can affect the body's regulation of these neurotransmitters. It may tell you that you are hungry and you need to eat even if your body actually has enough nutrients stored, and thus, there is a tendency for you to eat more. A lot of studies have also shown that sleep deprivation usually leads to metabolic dysregulation or alterations in glucose utilization and storage, insulin sensitivity, and/or lipid metabolism. In fact, poor sleep is associated with stress, blood sugar intolerance, which is a precursor to diabetes, and insulin resistance.

If you usually experience a hard time getting a shuteye, here are some research-based tips from the Sleep Foundation to improve the quality of your sleep as you try to lose weight:

Follow a regular sleep schedule.

Catching up on sleep after days of late nights can cause disruptions in your metabolism as well as appetite, which can lead to you adding more calorie intake.

Make your room an ideal place to sleep in. Or sleep in a dark room, and avoid exposure to light while sleeping. Use heavy or blackout curtains and turn off your TV and bedside lamp. Avoid using your mobile phone when it is your sleeping time.

Avoid eating right before bedtime.

One, it does not feel good to sleep with a heavy tummy. Two, eating late reduces the success of weight loss attempts.

Reduce stress. Identify the causes of your stress, and address them accordingly. If it is too much work, then you might want to find suitable ways that work for you on how you can reduce stress from work. Numerous studies show that chronic stress leads to poor sleep and weight gain in several ways, including stress–eating to cope with negative emotions.

Try to sleep early. If you are a night owl, you may have the tendency to consume more calories and be at a higher risk for weight gain. If you can, try to fix your schedule to allow for an earlier bedtime.

Essentially, if you are trying to lose weight and want to stay on the healthy side, make sure that you always get enough sleep. Good sleep is also important when you are exercising. Not having enough sleep results in having less energy for physical activities, and feeling tired makes exercising less safe, especially if you are lifting weights. Healthy and balanced meals, enough sleep and rest, as well as right exercises are the key to losing weight and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

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