

- Body weight

# DOES LACK OF SLEEP CAUSE WEIGHT GAIN WHILE FASTING?

Plan restful sleep pattern to avoid overeating during suhour, iftar, doctors say

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Sleep is not just an act of shutting one's eyes, but also an important physiological function of the body that is meant to restore, heal and repair tissues and regulate the body's metabolism. That is the reason why doctors insist that people must not stay awake for long hours during Ramadan. Instead, people must make it a point to get a total of seven to eight hours of sleep throughout the day, if continuous eight hours of night-sleep is difficult during the fasting month.



Commenting on the importance of sleep and the impact sleep deprivation can have during Ramadan, Dr Arun Sharma, medical director and specialist neurologist, Emirates Hospital Clinics, said: "Sleep is undeniably important in maintaining a fine metabolic balance. The circadian rhythm [the internal biological clock regulated by the sunrise-sunset cycle of the day] of the body, when disturbed, leads to an array of downstream hormonal and biochemical consequences, including glucose intolerance and obesity."

## Stages of sleep

Giving an insight into the phases of sleep during the night, Dr Vivek Karan, consultant neurologist, Thumbay University Hospital, said there are four stages of sleep:

Stage 1: Transition from wakefulness to sleep — duration roughly five minutes.

Stage 2: Body temperature drops and heart rate slows — duration roughly 20 minutes.

Stage 3: Muscles relax, blood pressure and breathing rate reduces — deepest sleep.

Stage 4: Eyes move rapidly, body becomes relaxed and dreams occur.

He added: "During stage three and four of the sleep phase, the body undertakes cell repair and rebuilding and hormones are secreted to promote bone and muscle growth. The human body also uses deep sleep to strengthen immunity, so you can fight off illness and infection."

## How sleep deprivation can trigger hormonal imbalance

Dr Sharma elaborated that while intermittent fasting has proven to be a healthy option to detoxify our body, it is important to understand our hunger mechanism and what triggers it, especially when people are skipping regular bedtime hours.

"The appetite centre is located in the brain, but it is influenced and regulated by peripheral hormones such as leptin and ghrelin.

The former promotes a sense of satiety and the latter induces hunger. During consecutive days of prolonged fasting, an incremental reduction in leptin levels has been documented with a concomitant increase in ghrelin levels. Our mind responds to this altered equation between the two hormones by displaying a distinctive propensity to consume food rich in carbohydrates and salt."

Dr Sharma added that by regulating sleep it helps regulate these hormones and discourages the unhealthy pattern of eating. "Sleep deprivation can trigger unhealthy eating. During Ramadan, people who are fasting must get their eight hours of sleep, so that unhealthy eating patterns are not triggered," he said.

People must be mindful of avoiding high-carbohydrate and high-glucose food items. The cycle is vicious. Lack of sleep will trigger a hormonal imbalance, which in turn will trigger an unhealthy pattern of eating, which in turn may cause fluid retention, weight gain and an increased risk of incurring diabetes.