

Extra sleep is good for your health

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An extra five to 10 minutes of deep sleep at night may help prevent dementia, but the key is establishing good sleep habits early in life.

A Melbourne study has found that maintaining quality sleep with ageing could help prevent the condition that affects the cognitive function of 400,000 Australians.

It found a loss of just 1 per cent of deep sleep, also called slow wave sleep, a year may increase the risk of dementia by a staggering 27 per cent in people aged over 60.

This is the first time research has linked changes in the composition of sleep to the risk of getting dementia.

“This is important because now that we have this knowledge we can encourage more research in this area,” lead author Matthew Pase said.

“These findings suggest SWS loss may be a modifiable dementia risk factor.”

SWS is the deepest stage of sleep. It accounts for 10 to 20 per cent of a total night’s sleep and is important, experts say, as this is when memory and learning are consolidated.

Researchers say it also plays a role in clearing the brain of metabolic waste that builds up during the day. This includes the waste that causes Alzheimer’s disease.

Associate Professor Pase is a dementia researcher from the Monash School of Psychological Sciences and the Turner Institute for Brain and Mental Health in Melbourne.

His research is published in the journal JAMA Neurology on Tuesday and involved more than 340 people from the Framingham Heart Study based in Massachusetts.

This renowned study started in 1948.

Professor Pase said his research concluded that the greater the decline of SWS, the higher the risk of dementia.

“The solution to improving SWS is not as simple as taking a sleeping tablet,” he said, adding it was more likely to entail digital devices to measure aspects of sleep and potentially acoustic stimulation.