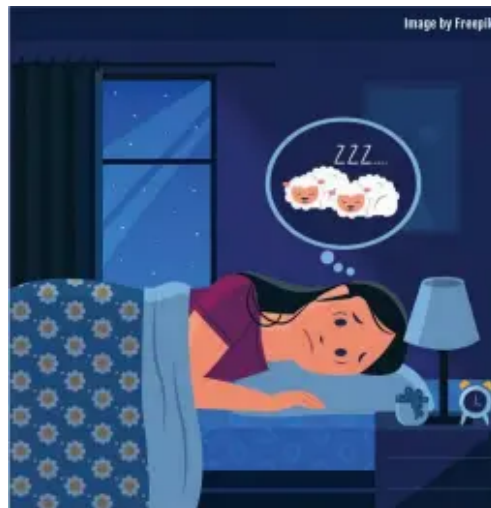


Your poor sleeping habits will give you hypertension

Practice sleep hygiene to normalize blood pressure

Manila Bulletin · 14 May 2024 · B-9 · CHESHIRE QUE, RND, RN, RD

A recent study published in February 2024 was conducted by Jeofrey B. Abalos and colleagues entitled “Prevalence, Awareness, Treatment, and Control of Hypertension Among Older Adults in the Philippines.” They have observed a high prevalence of hypertension among older Filipinos and a relatively low level of awareness and treatment of high blood pressure. Results have shown that 69.1 percent of older Filipinos had hypertension yet only 61.6 percent were aware that their blood pressure is elevated. Unfortunately, 51.5 percent were untreated.



Don't fall victim to the belief that getting hypertension is a norm as you age or that it is in your genes! While you can't control aging and change your genes, you have the ability not to manifest your hypertensive genes and you can be healthy at any age too. That is if you manipulate your environment by making changes in your lifestyle and other modifiable factors that impact your blood pressure level.

Modifiable lifestyle factors include diet (adapting a carefully planned plant-based way of eating and avoiding refined sugars, trans fats, sodium rich food, and fried foods); exercise (intentionally being physically active and having regular exercise of at least 2.5 hours of moderate exercise per week); quitting smoking; avoiding alcoholic beverages; and developing healthy coping skills for stress management.

You may have begun a healthy diet and an exercise program. You may have lost weight but why isn't your blood pressure at its optimum range? You may not be sleeping well. Sleep isn't a luxury. It is a must. Unfortunately, we take sleep for granted because we have a fear of missing out or we think that we are invincible and that sleep is for the weak. This is so wrong. If you want to be healthy and keep your blood pressure at bay, be mindful of your sleep.

The body repairs when we sleep.

The blood pressure also drops during sleep. This is known as nocturnal dipping brought about by a decrease in the sympathetic nervous system's activity. The sympathetic nervous system is responsible for our fight and flight response during dangerous and stressful situations. If a person is constantly under stress such as in the case of being unable to sleep, the sympathetic nervous system is activated and blood pressure increases.

Furthermore, it is not just lack of sleep that is detrimental to your blood pressure and overall health. An irregular sleeping pattern in duration and timing also increases your risk of hypertension.

12,287 adults were monitored using an under-mattress device to determine sleep duration and timing in addition to blood pressure recording. The study conducted by Hannah Scott and colleagues concluded that sleep irregularity both in duration and timing is a risk factor for poor cardiovascular health.

The cardiovascular system is composed of the heart and blood vessels where blood flows to nourish and oxygenate the entire body. A high blood pressure is damaging to the cardiovascular system, says research that was originally published in March 2023 entitled "Sleep Irregularity is Associated with Hypertension: Findings from Over 2 Million Nights with a Large Global Population Sample."

Do you tend to stay up late on weeknights and sleep in on weekends? You might want to monitor your blood pressure as oftentimes, hypertension does not have symptoms until the damage is massive. It is after all, a silent killer.

The American Heart Association recommends getting seven to nine hours of sleep nightly to promote optimum heart and brain health. Unfortunately, there are many barriers to getting adequate and quality sleep. Sometimes, we don't have time to relax throughout the day, therefore, we want to have some me time at night binge watching shows, reading or simply doing other activities that rob us of precious hours of sleep. Our food intake also impacts sleep especially if we consume caffeinated drinks late in the afternoon or night. Having late dinner and heavy meals would also prevent us from getting to bed earlier. If we don't set boundaries and work ourselves until late at night, then that is also a risk factor for getting high blood pressure.

Reflect on your lifestyle and how it affects your sleeping pattern if you don't want your blood pressure rising.

Are you having difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep? Are you getting too little sleep? You have a sleep problem and if this does not get corrected, rising of your blood pressure is inevitable.

cheshireque@gmail.com