- Sleep / Body weight



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How Sleep Affects Your Weight

BY *Meaghan Cameron*

GETTING SEVEN TO nine hours of sleep every night sets your body up for a slew of positive benefits. But the time you go to bed and get up can also have significant effects on your health—even your weight.

A study published in the *Journal of Activity, Sedentary, and Sleep Behaviors* looked at how bedtime and wake-up variability and total sleep time affect health markers and body weight. It also assessed whether exercise and an active lifestyle could help improve the negative health metrics associated with poor sleep.

The study of nearly 4,000 people aged 46 and over wore activity monitors to track their wake and sleep habits over two weeks. They were assessed for average blood pressure, level of abdominal fat, glucose and insulin levels, and cholesterol to see how sleep affected these metrics. Researchers discovered that irregular sleep habits resulted in several poor health metrics, especially for people who didn't move much during the day.

But there was some good news for troubled sleepers: if someone misses a few hours of sleep here and there, boosting exercise could help mitigate some of the adverse health effects.

If one of your priorities is weight loss, it seems you can't out-exercise poor sleep habits, especially as you age. People who varied their bedtime significantly had higher waist circumferences, even with additional exercise or daily movement factored in.

"Higher bedtime variability was associated with higher waist circumference regardless of time in bed, chronotype, and sedentary time or total physical activity," wrote researchers.

So if you want to maintain a healthy weight as you age, be sure to prioritize your sleep. R

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