

Sleep problems may affect a person's diet

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Sleep problems can influence a person's diet. Those who don't get enough sleep are less likely to cook their own meals and, instead, opt to eat fast food. It is the lack of nutritional value of this restaurant-prepared food that may cause health problems for these people in the long-run, according to a research abstract that will be presented Monday at SLEEP 2007, the 21st Annual Meeting of the Associated Professional Sleep Societies (APSS).

Mindy Engle-Friedman, PhD, of the City University of New York, surveyed nine females and 12 males, all undergraduates who completed a "sleep and eating habits" questionnaire. For seven days, the participants completed diaries, with each entry detailing how much sleep they got the night before and what they ate the following day.

Preliminary findings showed that individuals reporting problems with total sleep time, sleep latency and awakenings were more likely to eat restaurant-prepared or fast food rather than food made at home on day two than were individuals with no reported sleep problems. Further, individuals with sleep problems were also less likely to eat food prepared at home on days four and seven.

"Persons with sleep complaints are less likely to eat at home. These meals may require less effort and may be less healthful than meals prepared at home. Over time, persons with sleep complaints may have weight or health problems related to their nutrition," said Engle-Friedman.

The amount of sleep a person gets affects his or her physical health, emotional well-being, mental abilities, productivity and performance. Recent studies associate lack of sleep with serious health problems such as an increased risk of depression, obesity, cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

Experts recommend that adults get between seven and eight hours of sleep each night to maintain good health and optimum performance.

Persons who think they might be suffering from a sleep disorder are encouraged to consult with their primary care physician, who will refer them to a sleep specialist.

Source: American Academy of Sleep Medicine

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