

Mortality risk greater for elderly women who nap daily

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A new study appearing in *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* has found that older women who reported taking daily naps had a significantly greater risk of dying. The results of the study are in contrast to a number of prior studies which have indicated that daily napping improves health.

More information: This study is published in *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*.

Source: Wiley-Blackwell

Four communities consisting of 8,101 Caucasian women aged 69 and older were studied over a 7-year period. Women who reported napping daily were 44 percent more likely to die from any cause, 58 percent more likely to die from cardiovascular causes and 59 percent more likely to die from non-cardiovascular, non-cancer causes. This relationship remained significant among relatively healthy women.

The findings also showed that older women who reported sleeping between 9-10 hours per 24-hour period also had a greater risk of mortality compared to those who slept between 8-9 hours. The association was strongest for cardiovascular-related mortality.

The results of this study should not be interpreted to mean that napping causes poor health outcomes, and it is not recommended that older adults avoid napping. Napping and long sleep duration may be caused by sleepiness due to underlying sleep disorders or other medical conditions. "Since excessive sleep suggests that night time sleep is disrupted, interventions to treat sleep disorders and improve sleep quality in older women may reduce mortality risk," says Katie L. Stone, co-author of the study. Additional studies are needed to explain why napping is linked with increased risk of death.

Noted in the study, however, was that elderly women who napped less than 3 hours per week were not at increased risk of mortality compared to women who did not nap at all. "Shorter and less frequent naps do not appear to be related to any increase in risk of death," says Stone.

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