

Sleeping too little—or too much—associated with heart disease, diabetes, obesity

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A new study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) links too little sleep (six hours or less) and too much sleep (10 or more hours) with chronic diseases—including coronary heart disease, diabetes, anxiety and obesity—in adults age 45 and older. The American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) encourages patients suffering from these common chronic conditions to speak with a sleep medicine physician who can evaluate their sleep patterns.

"It's critical that adults aim for seven to nine hours of [sleep](#) each night to receive the health benefits of sleep, but this is especially true for those battling a chronic condition," said Dr. M. Safwan Badr, president of the AASM. "Common sleep illnesses—including [sleep apnea](#) and insomnia—occur frequently in people with a chronic disease and can hinder your ability to sleep soundly. So if you're waking up exhausted, speak with a sleep physician to see if there's a problem. If you are diagnosed with a sleep illness, treating it could significantly improve disease symptoms and your quality of life."

"Some of the relationships between unhealthy sleep durations and [chronic diseases](#) were partially explained by frequent mental distress and obesity," said study co-author Janet B. Croft, PhD, senior chronic disease epidemiologist in CDC's Division of Population Health. "This suggests that physicians should consider monitoring mental health and body weight in addition to sleep health for patients with chronic diseases."

In the study, published in the October issue of the *Journal Sleep*, short [sleepers](#) reported a higher prevalence of [coronary heart disease](#), stroke and diabetes, in addition to obesity and frequent mental distress, compared with optimal sleepers who reported sleeping seven to nine hours on average in a 24-hour period. The same was true for long sleepers, and the associations with coronary heart disease, stroke and diabetes were even more

pronounced with more sleep.

"Sleeping longer doesn't necessarily mean you're sleeping well. It is important to understand that both the quality and quantity of sleep impact your health," said Badr. "A healthy, balanced lifestyle is not limited to diet and fitness; when and how you sleep is just as important as what you eat or how you exercise."

The study involved more than 54,000 participants age 45 or older in 14 states. Nearly one third of participants (31 percent) were identified as short sleepers, meaning they reported sleeping six hours or less on average. More than 64 percent were classified as optimal sleepers, and only 4 percent of participants were long sleepers.

More information:

journalsleep.org/ViewAbstract.aspx?pid=29127

Provided by American Academy of Sleep Medicine

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