

Health Insights

February 2022

Sleep Loss Linked to Obesity

A study conducted by a team of sleep researchers at the University of Arizona Health Sciences found that nighttime snacking and junk food cravings may contribute to unhealthy eating behaviors and represent a potential link between poor sleep and obesity. Through a nationwide, phone-based survey of 3,105 adults from 23 U.S. metropolitan areas, participants were asked if they regularly consumed a nighttime snack and whether lack of sleep led them to crave junk food. They also were asked about their sleep quality and existing health problems.

About 60% of participants reported regular nighttime snacking, while roughly 67% said that lack of sleep led them to crave more junk food. Researchers found that junk food cravings likely doubled the potential of nighttime snacking, which corresponds to an increased risk for diabetes. They also found that poor sleep quality seemed to be a significant cause for craving junk food, which resulted in a greater likelihood of participants reporting obesity, diabetes, and other health problems.

"Laboratory studies suggest that sleep deprivation can lead to junk food cravings at night, which leads to increased unhealthy snacking at night, which then leads to weight gain. This study provides important information about the process, that these laboratory findings may actually translate to the real world," noted Michael A. Grandner, Ph.D., MTR, UA assistant professor of psychiatry and director of the UA Sleep and Health Research Program and the UA Behavioral Sleep Medicine Clinic. "This connection between poor sleep, junk food cravings, and unhealthy nighttime snacking may represent an important way that sleep helps regulate metabolism."

"Sleep is increasingly recognized as an important factor in health, alongside nutrition," said Christopher Sanchez, UA undergraduate nutrition and dietetics major, and author of the study. "This study shows how sleep and eating patterns are linked and work together to promote health."

University of Arizona Health Sciences. "Sleep loss linked to nighttime snacking, junk food cravings, obesity, diabetes." ScienceDaily. ScienceDaily, 1 June 2018. <www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/06/180601171900.htm>.



Mental Health Moment

The Heart and Mind Connection

The brain and the heart are intrinsically connected, each having a significant impact on how the other functions. Given this vital relationship, mental health can have a dramatic effect on heart health, and vice versa.

Stress

The mind's response to a perceived – or actual threatening situation – is known as stress. The body responds to the stress by increasing:

- Blood pressure
- Perspiration
- Respiratory rate
- Muscle tone
- Heart rate

Stress-Reducing Meditation

These techniques aim to achieve a relaxation response to reduce stress, improve the immune system and prepare the body for traumatic situations in the future. Here are three ways to meditate:

- **Quiet Space:** Go into a quiet environment and sit or lie down in a comfortable position. Then, focus your attention on something like a word, phrase, or sound. Repeat that one thing repeatedly. If you find that your mind wanders, try to refocus.
- **Progressive Relaxation:** Progressive relaxation is another useful exercise. Lie down or sit in a quiet area. Focus your attention on the muscle groups in your feet. As you “exhale” release tension from your body as you slowly move your attention through each muscle group until you reach your head. As an alternative, you may tighten the muscles in each group for several seconds, then physically release the tension.
- **Visualization:** Picture yourself clearing your body of the negative thoughts and energy. For instance, imagine that you are ridding yourself of stress and pressure. Concentrate on releasing negative energy, which will ultimately reduce the tension in your mind.

Three Steps to Getting on a Sleep Schedule

While you may not be able to control every single factor that could interfere with your ability to get a good night's sleep, you can take control of your sleep schedule. Your body needs a regular sleep schedule, and following one is easier than you might think. Here are three simple steps you can take to get started today:

1. Make gradual adjustments.

Just like making changes to your diet, making slight adjustments to your sleep schedule will help you develop habits you can stick to. If your goal is to go to bed earlier, instead of trying to go to bed three hours earlier, start by going to bed 30 minutes earlier. Increase the 30-minute increments every few days until you reach your goal.

2. Keep it consistent.

When it comes to setting a sleep schedule, consistency is key. Your body's natural clock (known as circadian rhythm) needs to follow a routine; otherwise, it gets thrown out of whack.

3. Don't hit the snooze button.

Getting those five (or 25) extra minutes of sleep after you hit the snooze button may be tempting. Unfortunately, delaying your alarm won't help you get any more restful sleep and can potentially do more harm than good to your sleep schedule.



Slow Cooker Spinach and Bell Pepper Greek Frittata

Ingredients:

- Cooking spray
- 4 large eggs
- 4 large egg whites
- 1/3 cup low-fat milk
- 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano (crumbled)
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 10 ounces frozen chopped spinach, thawed, drained, and squeezed until very dry
- 1/2 cup bottled roasted red bell peppers, drained, patted dry, and chopped
- 3 ounces soft goat cheese, crumbled
- 2 small thinly sliced green onions

Lightly spray the slow cooker with cooking spray. In a large bowl, whisk together the eggs, egg whites, milk, oregano, salt, and pepper. Stir in the remaining ingredients. Pour into the slow cooker.

Cook, covered, on low for 2 1/2 to 3 hours, or until set (the frittata doesn't jiggle when the slow cooker is gently shaken). Using a wide spatula, gently lift the frittata out of the slow cooker. Transfer to a cutting board. Let stand for 5 minutes before slicing.

Calories: 121, Total Fat: 6.5 g (Saturated Fat: 3 g, Polyunsaturated Fat: 1 g, Monounsaturated Fat: 2 g), Cholesterol: 131 mg, Sodium: 286 mg, Total Carbohydrate: 4 g, Dietary Fiber: 2 g, Sugars: 2 g and Protein: 11 g

"Greek Frittata with Spinach Goat Cheese and Roasted Red Bell Peppers." [recipes.heart.org](https://recipes.heart.org/en/recipes/greek-frittata-with-spinach-goat-cheese-and-roasted-red-bell-peppers). Accessed January 1 2022. <https://recipes.heart.org/en/recipes/greek-frittata-with-spinach-goat-cheese-and-roasted-red-bell-peppers>.

Sleep Health Quiz

Sleep Loss Linked to Obesity

1. What did two-thirds of the participants report when they lacked sleep?
 - a. Craving more junk food
 - b. Lack of motivation
 - c. Napping more often
2. Select all that apply: What health concerns can arise from a lack of sleep?

<input type="checkbox"/> Diabetes	<input type="checkbox"/> Weight Gain
<input type="checkbox"/> Obesity	<input type="checkbox"/> Other Health Problems

Three Steps to Getting on a Sleep Schedule

3. What are the three steps to getting on a sleep schedule?

4. Define "Keep it consistent":

Mental Health Moment

5. What are the three stress-reducing meditation techniques?

See page 4 for quiz answers

Healthy Habits Calendar

February 2022 - Sleep Health

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 Hello February! This month's challenge is "Lights Out". Start today for better health and improved sleep.	2 Wellness Wednesday: Make a meal plan for this week. Include more fruits and veggies in your meals and snacks.	3	4 Fitness Friday: Make plans to attend a group fitness class, or host friends for an at home workout!	5
6	7 Motivation Monday: Listen to a guided meditation and write down 20 things you're grateful for.	8 Tuesday's Tip: Improve your sleep by creating a more restful environment	9	10 Challenge Check In: How's the "Lights Out" challenge going? Reflect on how your sleep habits affect your current health.	11	12 Try Something New: Go outside and try a new activity.
13 Sunday Sleep Habits: Eating late at night can affect sleep quality. Avoid snacking a couple hours before bed.	14	15	16 Wellness Wednesday: Check on your Mental Health. Do one thing today to benefit your Mental Health.	17	18 Fitness Friday: Go for a walk! Bring along a family member or friend.	19
20	21 Motivation Monday: Take time to read or listen to an audiobook.	22 Tuesday's Tip: Reduce blue light exposure 2 hours before bedtime.	23	24 Challenge Check In: This month's challenge is almost over! Share with a friend how your sleep habits have improved this month.	25	26
27 Sunday Sleep Habits: Try meditating or writing before bed instead of scrolling or watching TV.	28					

Answers to Quiz:

Q1: a. Craving more junk food | Q2: Diabetes, Obesity, Weight Gains, Other Health Problems

Q3: Make adjustments, Keep it consistent, and Don't hit the snooze button

Q4: Follow a routine | Q5: Quiet Space, Relax, and Imagine



Employee Name _____

Date (m-d-yyyy) _____

Challenge: Lights Out!

30 Day Challenge:

This month's challenge invites you to go to bed at the same time for 4 days each week for the duration of the challenge. Being consistent with your sleep schedule is very important because it will reset your body's internal clock. By doing this, you will fall asleep easier and have more deep, restful sleep. You might even consider tracking your sleeping habits and setting goals to improve them. Throughout this challenge, you will be given some different ideas to improve sleep. Try them out, find what works for you, and establish a regular sleeping routine.

Week 1

What time did you go to bed?

Sunday	
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	

Week 2

What time did you go to bed?

Sunday	
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	

Week 3

What time did you go to bed?

Sunday	
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	

Week 4

What time did you go to bed?

Sunday	
Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	
Saturday	