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“Religions may have persisted because they provide a narrative of how to live a fulfilled life.”

Paul J. Zak

Sleep Magic

Rest can help you lose weight, sharpen your mind, improve heart health, and more.



The Sleep-Heart Connection

Can getting enough sleep help with your heart health?

Published on January 24, 2012 by Michael J. Breus, Ph.D. in Sleep Newzzz

Here's some serious and important [news](#) about sleep and heart health: there's yet more evidence of a link between sleeplessness and heart disease. The results of a large-scale study show that people who suffer from insomnia are at higher risk for heart attacks.

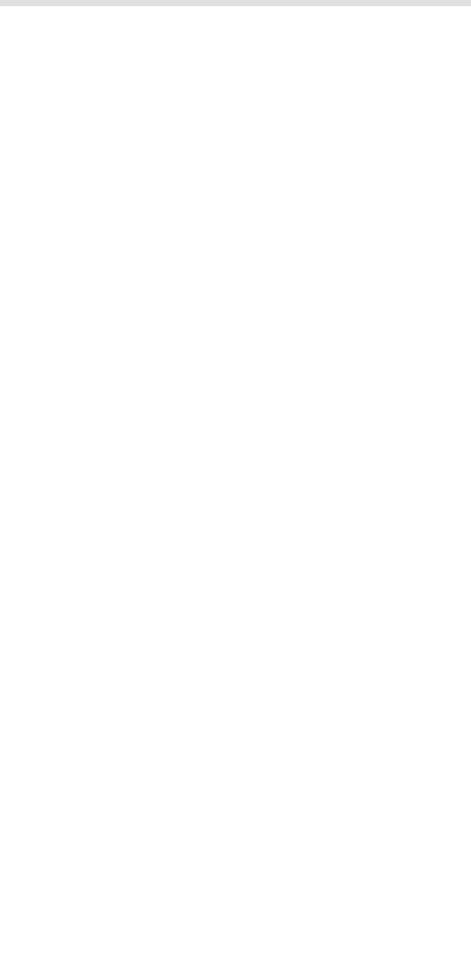
The [study](#), which was conducted by scientists at the Norwegian Institute of Science and Technology, included 52,610 men and women, who began by answering a survey that included questions about their sleep. Researchers followed up with the participants over a period of 11 years, during which time 2,368 people included in the study experienced a first heart attack. After adjusting for several health and lifestyle factors, including age, sex, education, physical fitness, smoking, alcohol consumption and high blood pressure, the researchers determined that:

- People who had difficulty falling asleep had a 45% greater risk of heart attack compared to those who regularly fell asleep without trouble.
- People who had trouble staying asleep throughout the night had a 30% greater risk of heart attack than people who were able to sleep through the night.
- People who woke feeling tired and un-rested had a 27% higher risk of heart attack than people who woke feeling refreshed.

These results are the latest contribution to a growing body of evidence that disordered sleep, such as insomnia, increases the risk of cardiovascular problems for both men and women:

- Too little sleep-or too much sleep-may cause an [increased](#) risk of high blood pressure, according to one study.
- Another [study](#) found that lack of sleep may contribute to calcium deposits in the arteries
- [Research](#) indicates that adults who sleep fewer than 6 hours per night are at a higher risk for inflammation in the body, which can contribute to heart disease
- Another [study](#) showed that adults who slept fewer than 6 hours nightly were at a 48% higher risk of heart disease, and a 15% greater risk of stroke.
- Even in people who are very physically [fit](#), a lack of sleep appears to increase the risk of heart problems
- The cardiovascular risks that are associated with low sleep appear to be more serious for [women](#)

In the current study, it's the effects of insomnia on the heart that is being investigated. [Insomnia](#) is an all-too-common sleep disorder, affecting as



Sleep Magic



The Sleep-Heart Connection
Can getting enough sleep help heart health?



Sleep Helps Protect Your Brain
During sleep, our brain's memory centers are busy consolidating recall.

Nap Hard, Get Smart
Napping may boost your learning

many as a third or more of American adults, according to the National Institutes of Health. There are two basic types of insomnia. Acute insomnia consists of short-term episodes of sleeplessness. Chronic insomnia, on the other hand, can last for months or years. Most people with chronic insomnia spend several nights a week struggling to fall asleep or stay asleep.

How do we identify insomnia? You may be surprised at how broad the definition can be. Insomnia can include several difficulties related to sleep. For some people, it may involve an inability to fall asleep. For others, insomnia may be more about struggling to stay asleep throughout the night. People coping with insomnia may also wake in the morning already feeling tired-missing the feeling of being refreshed and restored from a night of sound sleep. Any of these problems-or a combination of them-can be considered insomnia. Its effects can linger throughout the day, in fatigue, concentration problems, difficulty with memory, and irritability.

Insomnia is a sleep problem that can happen to anyone-even children-but the likelihood of dealing with insomnia increases as we age. We don't always know what causes insomnia-though identifying the root cause is important in helping to determine the most effective treatment-but there are many factors than can precipitate this lack of sleep. An illness or a medical condition can bring about difficulty sleeping that, without treatment, can evolve into insomnia. Major life events-marriage, divorce, childbirth, death of a loved one, job changes-can bring about insomnia, as can certain lifestyles that include shift work or extensive travel. Stress is an enemy to sleep, and is an all-too-common cause of insomnia.

With so many adults affected by insomnia, and therefore exposed to the possible risks of heart disease and other illnesses, its critically important that this and other sleep disorders not be left unattended, by patients or by doctors and other health-care providers. What can you do to help lower your risk of insomnia, and protect your sleep-and your health?

Track your sleep. Being mindful of your sleep patterns is the best way to catch and treat any sleep problems early, before they become more entrenched and difficult. Keeping a [journal](#) or a log can help-keeping regular track of bedtimes and wake times, as well as how you feel in the morning when you wake up, can give you a clear picture of how you're *really* sleeping.

Exercise. Physical activity is good for your heart, your overall health, and your sleep. There's also [evidence](#) that it helps alleviate insomnia.

Manage your stress. Easy to say, right? This can be among the most important things you do to help your health and your sleep. Mindbody activities such as meditation, yoga, even massage, can help.

Talk to your doctor. Take that sleep journal with you to your next check up, and have a [real conversation](#) with your physician about your sleep-before it becomes a problem. Undiagnosed sleep disorders like insomnia put you at risk for heart problems and other health complications. Talking with your physician can be a first important step toward sleeping-and feeling-better.

Sweet Dreams,

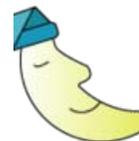
Michael J. Breus, PhD



capacity.



Creativity and the Neuroscience of Slumber
Sleeping on a problem helps you find better solutions. Really.



Why Sleep Is Important
Sleep is essential. It is not an option.



Sleep Better to Play Better
Athletic performance improved with more sleep.



Sleep You Way Thin
The wrong amount of sleep could cause weight gain.



The Therapeutic Power of Sleep
Sleep is a highly underrated activity!



11 reasons why a good night's sleep is so important.
11 reasons why a good night's sleep is so important



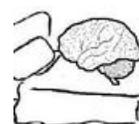
Why It's REALLY Not Cute When Kids Snore Like Grandpa
One more reason why not to ignore your child's snore



Drinking Coffee While Nursing Doesn't Ruin Babies' Sleep
Caffeine intake while nursing and babies' sleep



How to Set Boundaries in the Bedroom
A cartoon about what's okay, and what's not okay, for your partner to do.



Fix Your Sleep Hygiene
14 tips for getting better sleep.



A No-Nonsense Guide to Great Napping
5 tips to making the most of your nap time

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Five Ways to Revamp Your Sleep Habits
Who Needs Sleep? You Do!



The Sixth Vital Sign
Afar into the land of Nod.



REM Sleep Behavior Disorder and Neurologic Disease
I think I will stay up late tonight.



Dreaming of Losing Weight: The Nexus of Nod
Do you count sheep or lamb chops?



Pipe Dreams and Sleep in Fibromyalgia
Why some dream of sleep.



A Sexual Cure for Restless Leg Syndrome: Feet Don't Fail Me Now
Take two Viagra and call me in the morning.



What's Keeping You Awake?
Worry feels like motivation but it is actually a de-motivator



Drugging babies to help them sleep is NOT the solution
Most kids shouldn't be on sleep medications.



Restless Genital Syndrome: The Intersection of Chronic Pain and Chronic Arousal
This is one itch that will not always be scratched.



5 Strategies to Ensure a Great Night's Sleep
Great sleep is all about developing great sleep habits.



Better Sleep in 10 Simple Steps
Curing insomnia.

Do We Learn While We're Asleep?



Studies show that sleep enhances learning, memory, and problem solving



Sleep: Strange Bedfellows
Peculiar and unknown facts about shut-eye. Did you know sleep affects your memory, heart health, teeth, and more.

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