[IMAGE]

Less Sleep = More Junk Food?

By Editorial Staff

We've all been there: mired on <u>the couch</u> late at night, flipping from one channel to the next, fighting the need to sleep. Whatever your reason for getting less sleep than you need, the consequence from a nutritional perspective may be frightening. According to a recent study, sleep deprivation may increase the tendency to eat more, particularly junk food.

Published in the journal *Sleep,* the study compared young adults who experienced four nights of "normal" sleep (8.5 hours nightly) with young adults with "restricted" sleep for four days (only four hours per night). On the final day of the study, all study participants received a healthy meal and then were allowed to graze, if desired, at a snack bar that included cookies, candy, chips and other junk foods. Members of the sleep-deprived group tended to eat snacks containing more carbohydrates, and nearly twice as much fat and protein compared to the normal sleep group.

The researchers speculate that their results may highlight the potential connection between sleep deprivation and production of specific <u>brain chemicals</u> that help regulate appetite.

Adequate sleep is important for a <u>number of reasons</u>, but if you're trying to eat healthy and avoid weight gain, getting less sleep than you need on a regular basis may sabotage your efforts. If you're experiencing sleep disruption or can't seem to get enough sleep on a regular basis, talk to your doctor before chronic sleep deprivation and its health consequences develop.

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