

[IMAGE]

Want to Lose Weight? Try Catching Some Zzzzs

Are you struggling to shed some pounds or working hard to maintain your current weight? The answer may be as easy as making some slight adjustments to your sleep patterns. A recent study showed that sleep deprivation may be linked to the hormones responsible for controlling hunger.

Researchers studied 12 healthy men for two consecutive nights in which sleep was limited to four hours and two consecutive nights in which participants were allowed to sleep for 10 hours. Volunteers reported feeling hungrier after sleeping for only four hours compared to sleeping for 10 hours.

Researchers believe the connection is related to leptin and ghrelin, two hormones responsible for regulating appetite. Leptin signals the brain that the body is full, while ghrelin triggers feelings of hunger. Following the four-hour nights, participants showed an 18 percent decrease in leptin and a 28 percent increase in ghrelin. Although the authors acknowledge study limitations, namely the sample size, they do note that "Additional studies should examine the possible role of chronic sleep curtailment as a previously unrecognized risk factor for obesity."

Clearly, a good night's sleep is important. Whether you're trying to lose weight or simply want to take better care of yourself. Experts suggest no fewer than seven hours a night.

Reference:

Spiegel K, Tasali E, Penev P, Van Cauter E. Sleep duration and levels of hormones that influence hunger. *Annals of Internal Medicine* 2004; 141:846-50.

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