

[IMAGE]

The Sleep "Sweet Spot" to Avoid Cognitive Decline

By Editorial Staff

Cognitive decline, or the decline in memory, concentrating, learning and/or making everyday decisions, is on the one hand a natural consequence of aging. On the other hand, no one wants to experience any of the above "declines," much less more serious forms of cognitive impairment such as Alzheimer's disease. That means we should all be paying attention when potential ways to stave off cognitive decline present themselves.

Case in point: A new study that suggests sleep – specifically the number of hours you get as you age – can play a major role in your rate of cognitive decline. Published in *JAMA Network Open*, the study found that the "sweet spot" to minimize risk is between four and 10 hours per night. Adults (ages 45-50) who reported sleeping four or fewer, or 10 or more, hours per night, experienced cognitive decline as they got older at a significantly faster rate than adults who reporting sleeping 5-9 hours nightly.

sleeping - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark Memory appeared to be the most impacted over time by sleep extremes (four or fewer, 10 or more hours per night). This finding particularly alarming because according to the study authors, "Memory impairment is the core symptom of dementia and can be considered a factor in the conversion from mild cognitive impairment to dementia."

If you're getting older and have become accustomed to sleeping either very little or for long stretches, you may think you can "handle it" or that it's "right for you," but as this study emphasizes, you may be doing damage that will manifest as cognitive decline – exactly what you want to avoid. Talk to your doctor for more information on sleep health and how you can optimize your sleep.

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