

# Insomnia Can Hinder Your Weight Loss

## Sleepless Nights Stop Progress

– By Laura Bofinger

So you already know that a well-balanced diet and a regular exercise program are keys to your weight loss plan. But are you listening to that other recommendation you've heard more than once in your life? Get plenty of sleep. Recent medical studies show that sleep loss can increase hunger and affect your body's metabolism in a way that makes weight loss more difficult. So if you're making a good effort in your nutrition and fitness plans, you still might be able to improve your success with better sleep.

### How Sleep Loss Affects Weight Loss

1. Hormone function affects the way fat cells respond to the food we eat. *Cortisol* is a hormone that is commonly released in response to physical or emotional stress. When we are deprived of sleep, cortisol is released at an increased level and makes us feel hungry even if we are full. As a result, people who continue to lose sleep on a regular basis will tend to experience hunger even when they have had an adequate amount of food.
2. Sleep loss results in less deep sleep, the kind that restores our energy levels. Losing deep sleep hours decreases *growth hormone* levels. Growth hormone is a protein that helps regulate the body's proportions of fat and muscle in adults. With less growth hormone, we reduce the ability to lose fat and grow muscle.
3. With a loss of sleep, your body may not be able to metabolize carbohydrates as well, which leads to an increased storage of fats and higher levels of blood sugar. Excess blood sugar can lead to *insulin resistance*. Insulin resistance means that the body has trouble disposing of glucose in the liver and other tissues. It is a trigger for serious health problems such as obesity, cardiovascular disease, and type II diabetes.
4. A lack of sleep goes hand in hand with a lack of energy – not a new concept, but perhaps you've grown used to your daily levels of energy and don't notice that you could gain more. Not only do we accomplish less with less sleep, we also don't burn as many calories. The body's reaction is to hoard calories as fat, making our weight loss goals more difficult than they need to be. Sleep is starting to sound pretty important now, isn't it?

### Why Are You Losing Sleep and What Can You Do About It?

Don't add this information about sleep and weight loss as a stress factor in your life. Take charge and examine why you are losing sleep so that you can do something about it.

Some people choose to live with fewer sleeping hours simply because they think they can

stretch more hours of activity in their day. If this is you, remember that a better night's sleep may actually increase your productivity in a shorter amount of time throughout your day because you have more energy and can think more clearly than when you are tired. For others, sleep loss is a result of already being overweight, which has brought on sleep apnea, lower back pain, or depression and anxiety. There are many management options for such problems, some of which might require medical attention. Check out the following tips first. They are simple enough for anyone to try to help themselves improve their sleep.

### **Do's**

- Eat a healthy diet.
- Establish a regular exercise routine of 3-4 times per week, and do it well before bedtime.
- Try pre-bedtime rituals that relax you – warm baths, light reading, listening to calming music or recorded nature sounds.
- Create a peaceful sleep environment. Adjust the darkness to what works best for you. Make sure the temperature of the room is set to your comfort level.
- Give yourself sleep hours instead of trying to squeeze more activity into one day. Adequate sleeping hours will increase your productivity during waking hours.
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### **Don'ts**

- Don't go to bed hungry, but don't eat a big meal right before bedtime.
- Don't nap in the daytime if you have sleeping problems at night.
- Don't take in caffeine, nicotine, or alcohol from the late afternoon and beyond.
- Don't lie in bed agitated if you can't sleep. After a half hour, move to a different room and do something relaxing until you feel sleepy again.

Realize that you need to listen to your body in determining how much sleep is right for you. Too much sleep can be just as unhealthy as too little sleep. Recognize that the sleep you get each night is just as important as the choices you make in eating and exercising as you achieve your weight loss goals.