

## Did you know lack of sleep may contribute to weight gain?



*This post is from the dietetic interns enrolled in the Pasco County Dietetic Internship.*

We have all heard the phrase “beauty sleep,” to describe a good night’s rest, but did you know that the amount of sleep you get could affect your weight as well? Research has shown that being overweight is the most significant risk factor for Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA). OSA occurs when the upper airway is partially or completely blocked during sleep, as a result, the diaphragm and chest muscles must work harder to open the obstructed airway and allow air into the lungs. Typically, when breathing resumes, it causes loud gasping, snorting or jerking of the body.

Researchers found that approximately eight hours of sleep is associated with a lower body mass index, lower levels of ghrelin and high levels of leptin. Ghrelin is the hormone that triggers appetite and leptin is the hormone that signals “fullness” to the body. High levels of ghrelin can be what is causing late-night cravings for high-calorie, sugary foods.

A recent analysis of 45 studies on sleep and weight concluded that there is an increased risk of obesity in both children and adults who routinely obtain less sleep than their age-specific recommendations. Those with shortened sleep consumed more calories from carbohydrates and fat which led to a higher body mass index than their peers with adequate sleep.

An additional study showed that 90% of a group of very overweight teenagers with OSA who lost a significant amount of weight and kept the weight loss one year later no longer had the diagnosis of OSA ! Weight loss in this group “cured” their OSA.

To summarize, inadequate sleep leads to alterations in leptin and ghrelin levels, hormones which alter appetite, calorie intake, and body weight. Adequate sleep is important for physical and mental health in children and adults.

For more information on sleep, obstructive sleep apnea and weight, the SRAHEC StellarEd Solutions has several distance continuing education courses on these topics.

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