

Short sleep duration is associated with symptoms of depression

The average person spends about a third of his life sleeping, but for the busy and the ambitious that is a lot of time. Many of us would rather spend that time working on important projects or tending to our never-ending responsibilities, but we cannot just stop sleeping. The physiologic effects are simply too high. What about curbing the sleep hours! That should be okay, right?

As it turns out, it is not okay. The importance of the duration and quality of sleep is woefully understated. We have a lot to learn about the mechanisms by which sleep influences our normal function, but the effects of poor sleep are evident. Skimping on sleep is skimping on one's physical and mental health.

In our paper, my colleagues and I have explored the relationship between sleep and mental health in a sample of nurses. We found a significant independent association between sleep duration and symptoms of depression; this association was incremental, meaning it became stronger with decreasing sleep. Those who slept five hours or less were four times more likely to have severe symptoms of depression than who slept eight hours or more.

We also found that poor health behaviors clustered together. Those who slept poorly were less likely to exercise and more likely to skip breakfast and meals. It is important to note that our data were correlational in nature, and the association we found between sleep hours and depressive symptoms was likely bidirectional.

The chronically sleep-deprived, especially those who work shifts and long hours, should make a conscious effort to increase their sleep hours. They should plan their sleep schedule and make it a health priority. The employers should consider sleep when they make work rosters for their employees, for sufficient sleep ensures health and performance. Sleep duration is a simple thing to change but is an important step towards a healthy lifestyle.

Ayman Yousif Ibrahim, Nazmus Saquib

College of Medicine, Sulaiman AlRajhi University, P.O. Box 777, 51941, Al Bukayriah, Saudi Arabia

Publication

[Sleep duration is associated with depressive symptoms among expatriate nurses](#)

Ibrahim AY, Chamsi Basha A, Saquib J, Zaghoul MS, Al-Mazrou A, Saquib N
J Affect Disord. 2019 Oct 1