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WELLNESS REPORT

Too Much or Too Little Sleep Bad for Your Brain

By Steven Reinberg

Everyone needs sleep, but too little or too much of it might contribute to declines in thinking, a new study suggests.

Too little sleep was defined as four or fewer hours a night, while too much was deemed 10 or more hours a night. The ideal amount? Seven hours a night.

"Cognitive function should be monitored in individuals with insufficient or excessive sleep," said study author Yanjun Ma, from Peking University Clinical Research Institute, in China.

Still, Ma cautioned that the study can't prove that too little or too much sleep causes mental ("cognitive") decline, only that there appears to be an association.

According to the National Sleep Foundation, sleep is essential because it lets your body and mind recharge. The right amount of sleep also helps you stay healthy and prevent diseases.

Without enough sleep, the brain cannot function properly, impairing concentration, clear thinking and memory-processing. But the mechanisms underlying these associations remain unclear. It's possible that inflammation might be related to excessive sleep, Ma said.

Meanwhile, too little sleep might increase cerebrospinal fluid levels of amyloid plaque and tau protein, which are hallmarks of Alzheimer's disease, Ma added.

Dr. Sam Gandy, associate director of the Mount Sinai Alzheimer's Disease Research Center in New York City, added, "More than any other time in the circadian cycle, during sleep, the brain's glymphatic system is active in washing out excess levels of toxins, including amyloid-beta peptide."



Each person probably has some optimum balance between sleep and amyloid clearance, with too much or too little of one causing the other to tip in the wrong direction, he explained.

"The technology for individual optimization has not been generally rolled out to the level of toxins in the brain, but this looks to be an important emerging area," Gandy said. "Optimizing sleep and amyloid clearance is likely to join sleep apnea as another readily treatable factor driving late-life cognitive decline."

For the study, Ma's team collected data on more than 20,000 men and women who took part in either the English Longitudinal Study of Aging or the China Health and Retirement Longitudinal Study.

Participants reported their sleep habits and were given tests of cognition.

During follow-up, cognitive scores dropped faster among people with four hours or fewer and 10 hours or more of sleep per night than those who slept seven hours per night, the researchers found.

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IN HISTORY**



MEDICAL MILESTONES IN HISTORY



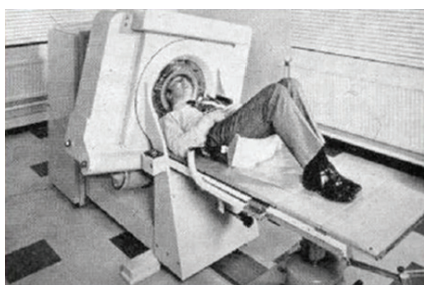
1944

David Sheridan invented the disposable catheter



1958

Dr Ake Senning implants first pacemaker in a person at Karolinska Hospital in Stockholm, Sweden



1971

The first CT scan took place at Atkinson Memorial Hospital in Wimbledon, UK

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This association is called a U-shaped relationship, because the effects of sleep on cognition are seen at both ends of the curve.

The report was published online Sept. 21 in JAMA Network Open.

Dr. Yue Leng, an assistant professor of psychiatry at the University of California, San Francisco, co-authored an editorial that accompanied the study. She said, "An increasing number of studies have found a U-shaped relationship between sleep duration and cognition, where both short and long sleep duration was associated with worse cognition."

But the implication of this U-shaped relationship is unclear, partly because of the limitations in study design, Leng said.

To really determine how sleep affects cognition, studies need to go beyond sleep duration and take into account both sleep quality and quantity, Leng noted. Perhaps, then, sleep can be used in the prevention and management of dementia, she suggested.

"It has been almost two decades since sleep duration was first suggested to be linked with cognitive health in older adults," Leng said. "Better study design and more valid and reliable measurements are needed to help clarify this relationship."

The National Sleep Foundation recommends that adults get seven to nine hours of sleep each night.

To get a good night's sleep, the foundation recommends having good sleep habits that include:

- Having a realistic bedtime and sticking to it every week and weekend night.
- Keeping the bedroom cool and dark.
- Banning televisions, computers and tablets, cellphones and other electronic devices from the bedroom.
- Not ingesting caffeine, alcohol or large meals in the hours before bedtime.
- Not using tobacco day or night.
- Exercising during the day, which can help you wind down and get ready for sleep.

Arm Squeezes With Blood Pressure Cuffs Might Aid Recovery After Stroke

After administering clot-busting drugs to treat a stroke, using blood pressure cuffs to squeeze each arm might aid recovery, a new, small Chinese study suggests.

In the technique -- called remote ischemic post-conditioning -- the flow of oxygen-rich blood is repeatedly interrupted and restored using blood pressure cuffs on the arms. Earlier studies have found that the technique may prevent tissue damage by helping the body handle changes in blood flow and the damage that may occur from a stroke, researchers say.

"The findings show a promising future prospect of remote ischemic post-conditioning and have important clinical implications," said researcher Dr. Guo-liang Li, of First Affiliated Hospital of Xi'an and Jiaotong University in Xi'an, China.

"As we all know, the therapy has a lot of advantages," he said, calling it noninvasive, easy-to-use, cost-effective and safe.



Even though clot-busting drugs have saved many stroke patients, 32% do not have a favorable outcome. This is partly because blood flow is not completely restored and vessels can clot even after clot-busting drugs are given, Li said.

"Remote ischemic post-conditioning can be a complementary treatment that can improve the prognosis in stroke patients," he said.

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This study was done in China, but Li said the technique has also been studied in the United Kingdom, France and Denmark.

For the study, Li's team randomly assigned 68 people (average age: 65) who suffered a stroke. All were treated within 4.5 hours with a medication that dissolves blood clots called tPA. Half also received ischemic post-conditioning therapy.

Over an average of 11 days, post-conditioning participants wore blood pressure cuffs on both arms for 40 minutes, alternating cycles of inflation for five minutes and deflation for three minutes. Treatments were done twice a day.

Stroke recovery was gauged on a scale of no symptoms; no significant disability despite some symptoms; or slight disability. People who had no symptoms after three months were considered to have had a favorable recovery.

Seventy-two percent of those who wore the blood pressure cuff had a favorable recovery, compared with 50% of those who didn't, the researchers found. These findings remained significant even after

taking into account age, stroke severity and other factors.

During the trial, two people dropped out -- one because the cuffs caused skin redness and the other because the pressure applied during the procedure was uncomfortable. Researchers don't know how long the treatment is needed to be most effective.

They caution that ischemic post-conditioning is still experimental and isn't something that should be tried on recovering stroke patients at home.

"In the future, more studies are needed to confirm that the combined therapy of clot-busting drugs and remote ischemic post-conditioning is safe and effective in much larger groups of people before this experimental therapy can be performed at home," Li said.

Dr. Larry Goldstein, chairman of the Department of Neurology at the University of Kentucky, reviewed the findings.

"This single hospital study was aimed at determining whether the technique might be helpful in improving outcomes of

patients with stroke who were treated with a clot-busting drug and [it] suggests benefit," he said.

But, Goldstein added, the approach was used over an average 11 days -- longer than most U.S. stroke patients stay in the hospital. "This is not part of usual care here," he said.

Although the treatment is probably uncomfortable, Goldstein said the discomfort might be tolerated if it aids in stroke recovery.

"If it did improve outcomes, that [discomfort] would be a reasonable tradeoff," Goldstein said.

But the notion that remote ischemic post-conditioning improves blood vessel function is debatable, he added.

"It would need to be studied in larger, adequately controlled trials in a variety of populations conducted in multiple centers to determine whether it is clinically useful," Goldstein said.

Why Getting a Flu Shot is More Important Than Ever This Fall

Everyone 6 months of age and older should get a flu shot this season, the American Medical Association (AMA) says.

With the coronavirus pandemic raging, a flu shot is more important than ever to protect yourself, your loved ones and your community from the flu.

"Routine vaccination is essential preventive care for children, adolescents and adults -- including pregnant women -- that should not be delayed because of the pandemic," said AMA President Dr. Susan Bailey.

Experts have warned that a "twindemic" of flu and COVID-19 could overwhelm the health care system.

Just as wearing a mask helps prevent spread of the new coronavirus, getting a flu shot helps prevent people from getting sick and spreading flu to others.

Flu shots also shield people who can't get vaccinated, including very young children, cancer patients and those with weakened immune systems. When immunization rates are high, these people are protected because they're less likely to be exposed to the flu.

"This fall, an important reason to get a flu vaccine is to do your part to help conserve scarce medical resources as health care



workers continue to fight COVID-19," Bailey said in an AMA news release.

Flu activity increases in October and most often peaks between December and February. But it can last as late as May. Fall is the ideal time to get the flu vaccine, but it's never too late.

"We need to realize that we are all interconnected, and during this pandemic, getting vaccinated is a step to protect our individual and collective health," Bailey said.

The COVID-19 pandemic may affect when, where and how flu shots are given, according to the AMA. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has an online tool to help patients find nearby places to get vaccinated.

Exercise Boosts Physical, Mental Well-Being of Older Cancer Survivors

By Steven Reinberg

Active older adults -- cancer survivors included -- are in better physical and mental health than their sedentary peers, a new study finds.

More regular moderate to vigorous physical activity and less sedentary time improve the mental and physical health of older cancer survivors and older people without a cancer diagnosis, say researchers from the American Cancer Society.

"The findings reinforce the importance of moving more and sitting less for both physical and mental health, no matter your age or history of cancer," study co-author Dr. Erika Rees-Punia said.

"This is especially relevant now as so many of us, particularly cancer survivors, may be staying home to avoid COVID-19 exposure, and may be feeling a little isolated or down," Rees-Punia added in a cancer society news release.

For the study, the research team analyzed aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities, sitting time and mental and

physical health of nearly 78,000 people who took part in the society's Cancer Prevention Study II Nutrition Cohort.

The researchers found clinically meaningful differences in mental and physical health between the most and least active, and the least and most sedentary.

They say the findings support the importance of regular exercise and less sitting time as a way to improve quality of life for older men and women.

The American Cancer Society physical activity guidelines recommend that adults get 150 to 300 minutes of moderate-intensity activity or 75 to 150 minutes of vigorous-intensity a week. They also advise limiting sedentary behaviors like screen time.

"A simple walk or other physical activity that you enjoy may be good for your mind and body," Rees-Punia said.



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