OBESITY AND SLEEP

ℹ️ *Quick Facts:*

The body mass index (BMI) is a calculation that helps classify your weight status. A high BMI can be an indicator of high body fat. An adult with a BMI of 30 kg/m^2 or higher is considered to be obese. More than one-third of U.S. adults are considered obese. Sleep and obesity are closely related.

KEY POINTS:

- **Adults should sleep 7 or more hours per night on a regular basis to promote optimal health.**

- **Sleeping less than 7 hours nightly increases your risk of obesity.**

- **Excess body weight is a major risk factor for obstructive sleep apnea.**

- **Untreated sleep disorders such as sleep apnea also can contribute to weight gain.**

❓ *How Can I Learn More?*

- Talk to your board-certified sleep medicine physician.
- Visit **www.sleepeducation.org**

⚠️ *Am I At Risk:*

Your obesity risk is higher if you are inactive and eat an unhealthy diet. Healthy sleep also helps your body maintain a healthy weight. You are more likely to be obese if you sleep less than 7 hours nightly. Obstructive sleep apnea and other sleep disorders also can contribute to weight gain.

GENERAL OVERVIEW:

Your "energy balance" plays a vital role in preventing excess weight gain. The goal is to balance the calories you eat and drink with the calories you burn through physical activity.

Healthy sleep helps your body maintain its energy balance. Ongoing sleep loss causes changes in your body's hormone levels. These changes can increase hunger and cause you to crave junk food. Sleep loss also causes fatigue and sleepiness, which can result in reduced activity.

Excess body weight is a major risk factor for obstructive sleep apnea. As a result the risk of sleep apnea is much higher in people who are obese. Sleep apnea also becomes more severe as your BMI increases.

Untreated sleep disorders such as sleep apnea can disturb your sleep. Poor quality sleep can disrupt your energy balance and contribute to weight gain. Other common sleep disorders include chronic insomnia, restless legs syndrome and shift work disorder.

TREATMENT:

It is important to treat any sleep disorder that disrupts your sleep. Treating obstructive sleep apnea is especially important. Weight loss is one strategy to reduce the severity of sleep apnea. Try to lose weight and maintain a BMI of less than 25 kg/m². But weight loss alone is unlikely to cure your sleep apnea. So weight loss should be combined with another sleep apnea treatment.

The most common treatment for obstructive sleep apnea is continuous positive airway pressure therapy (CPAP). CPAP therapy provides airflow through a mask worn at night. This airflow increases the air pressure in your airway to keep it open, and restores normal breathing.

In people with severe obesity, CPAP sometimes is combined with bariatric surgery. This type of surgery makes changes to your digestive system to help you lose weight.

TIPS:

Sleep is one of the three pillars of a healthy lifestyle. To maintain a healthy energy balance, adults should sleep 7 or more hours per night. You also should get regular exercise. Do aerobic activities like walking, swimming or jogging. You also should do activities to strengthen your muscles. Finally, eat a healthy diet that limits fats, added sugars and sodium. A healthy eating pattern includes:

- **A variety of fruits and vegetables**
- **Whole grains**
- **Fat-free or low-fat dairy, including milk, yogurt and cheese**
- **A variety of protein foods, including seafood, lean meats and poultry, eggs, beans, nuts, seeds and soy**
- **Oils**

→ Next Steps:

- Make it a priority to sleep 7 or more hours nightly, eat a healthy diet and exercise regularly.
- Talk to your doctor about any ongoing sleep problems.
- Ask your doctor if your sleep problems may be having a negative impact on your weight.
- Your doctor may schedule you for a sleep study if you have symptoms of a sleep disorder like sleep apnea.

Questions For Your Physician

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

Sample Questions:

Why do I feel tired all the time?

Why do I wake up so early in the morning?

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