

## Less Sleep... More Weight!! What the...????

Getting a decent night's sleep apparently does more than provide good rest -- it seems to curb the number of pounds women put on as they age, according to a new study. Although the study didn't show a definite cause-and-effect relationship, there was a significant link between inadequate sleep and weight gain. Women who got only five hours of sleep a night, on average, gained substantially more weight than those who routinely rested for seven hours at a time.



In fact, women who got seven hours or more of sleep actually ate more than those getting just five hours of sleep. Exercise habits were approximately the same for the two groups-- although the group that slept seven hours tended to exercise a little more.

The women were part of the Nurses Health Study, which followed more than 68,000 women for 16 years. They were asked to report their weight and lifestyle regimen every two years. By the end of the study, women who slept five hours a night were 32 percent more likely to experience major weight gain -- defined as an increase of 33 pounds or more -- and 15 percent more likely to become obese, compared with women

who slept seven hours. And women who slept for six hours were 12 percent more likely to experience major weight gain and 6 percent more likely to become obese over the study period, compared with women who slept seven hours a night.

### Ways to Overcome Sleep Problems

Most of us have trouble sleeping occasionally: We're worried about a test or presentation, we're upset over a fight with our spouse, we've got a new baby at home, we've just gotten laid off, or we're starting a new job. Many of life's events disrupt our sleep, but thankfully they are short-lived and resolve rather quickly. If you're experiencing problems with sleep, here are some general tips on how to get adequate and more restful sleep:

- Set a regular sleep schedule and stick to it. Go to bed and get up at the same time every day, including weekends.
- Avoid foods and drugs with stimulants in them. Watch for hidden caffeine in teas, colas, and chocolate.
- Beware of medications that may contain stimulants. Some over-the-counter drugs for colds, cough, and allergies can disrupt sleep— talk with your doctor if you suspect any of your medications are interfering with your sleep.
- Don't eat a large meal close to bedtime.
- Avoid alcoholic beverages close to bedtime.
- Get moderate amounts of exercise every day.
- Develop a relaxation ritual right before retiring to bed.
- Make sure your bedroom is sleep-friendly – completely dark, no electronics, quiet and clean!
- If you are short on sleep on any given day, consider taking a brief (30-minute) nap in the afternoon to give yourself a boost.



If your problems don't resolve, keep a sleep diary. Note your eating patterns, alcohol and medication usage, sleeping times, and other behaviors to discern patterns to help pinpoint problem areas. If you are suffering from chronic insomnia, you should be evaluated by your physician or by a health-care professional to help get to the bottom of things.

## Sleep Tight!!

