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## Sleep Apnea May Spur Carb Cravings in Diabetics

**Researchers urge primary care doctors to screen those with type 2 disease for the disorder**

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WEDNESDAY, June 13 (HealthDay News) -- People with diabetes are at increased risk for obstructive sleep apnea, which appears to boost their craving for carbohydrates, a new study suggests.

Because unrestricted carbohydrates can harm someone with diabetes, the findings point to the need for primary care doctors to screen for obstructive sleep apnea in patients with type 2 diabetes, the study authors said.

The researchers checked 55 people for diabetes, obstructive sleep apnea and carbohydrate cravings, and found that more than half of them had diabetes. Eighty-two percent of the diabetic patients had obstructive sleep apnea, and diabetic patients had nearly double the risk of carbohydrate cravings as those without diabetes.

The investigators also found that patients with sleep apnea were nearly twice as likely to have high carbohydrate cravings as patients without the sleep disorder.

Obstructive sleep apnea occurs when the tissue in the back of the throat blocks the airway, which causes people to stop breathing while they are sleeping. The condition disrupts sleep and can cause daytime fatigue, and increases the risk of other health problems such as heart disease and stroke.

The study was scheduled for presentation Wednesday at the annual meeting of the Associated Professional Sleep Societies in Boston.

The findings offer an indication of the degree that sleep apnea can affect carbohydrate craving in people with diabetes, said study co-investigator Dr. Mahmood Siddique, clinical associate professor of medicine at the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School in New Brunswick, N.J.

"Previous studies have shown that sleep deprivation may lead to changes in hormones that regulate appetite and hunger," Siddique said in a news release from the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. "These hormonal changes can lead to significant craving for high-calorie carbohydrates such as cookies, candy, breads, rice and potatoes. The current study supports previous findings by validating this in a community sample of diabetics."

People with diabetes have excess blood sugar. Because carbohydrates break down into sugar in the body, they have the greatest impact of all the food groups on blood glucose level. Carbohydrates found in fresh fruit and whole grains are generally safer for patients with diabetes than sugary carbs.

An East Coast expert said doctors should be alert for sleep apnea among their diabetic patients. "Current national guidelines on the management of diabetes need to consider sleep apnea as an independent risk factor more vigorously," study principal investigator Dr. Anthony Cannon said in the news release.

"The management of patients with diabetes and or metabolic syndrome based solely on [drug therapy], exercise and nutritional modifications without taking into account the risk of sleep apnea may not lead to optimal outcomes for patients suffering from these chronic diseases," added Cannon, the American Diabetes Association regional president for central and southern Pennsylvania and southern New Jersey.

Cannon added that sleep apnea is often undiagnosed by primary care physicians. "Public policy can play a key role in the educational awareness of the association between sleep apnea and diabetes among both physicians and patients," he concluded.

While the study uncovered an association between sleep apnea and carb cravings in diabetics, it did not prove a cause-and-effect relationship.

Data and conclusions of research presented at meetings should be considered preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed medical journal.

### More information

The American Academy of Family Physicians has more about [sleep apnea](#).

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