The Important Role Sleep Plays in Weight Loss



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If you’ve ever followed any specific weight loss plans, it’s most likely you probably never thought to incorporate sleep into the plan. Most likely, you probably thought about getting up earlier and actually sacrificing sleep to get an extra workout in, staying up longer so you could burn more calories, or skipping power naps in the middle of the day because you thought it made you lazy. Contrary to what you might have thought in the past, studies show that sleep plays an important role in weight loss and helping you stick to your health goals.

Far too many adults report that they don’t get enough sleep each night. It’s suggested that as many as one third of American adults receive under six hours of sleep per night. For some, poor sleep may be the missing link when it comes to reaching weight loss goals. Poor sleep has been linked to obesity through the years. While everyone’s sleep patterns and requirements differ, studies show that getting fewer than seven hours of sleep per night is linked to weight changes. One review even concluded that inadequate sleep increased obesity risk by 55% in adults. Weight gain can also aggravate sleep disorders, such as sleep apnea. As a result, sleep quality can decline even further.

Have you ever noticed that after a poor nights’ sleep, you wake up craving all the foods you know you probably shouldn’t be eating? That’s because ghrelin, a hormone that signals to your brain that you are hungry, is higher when you get less sleep. Leptin, the hormone that signals fullness, is lower when you don’t get adequate sleep. This makes you more likely to overeat or feel hungrier. Similarly, being deprived of sleep can dull the activity of the part of your brain that controls decision-making, the frontal lobe. At the same time, the reward centers of your brain are activated by food when you are sleep-deprived. This may cause you to indulge your cravings for foods that are calorie-laden, fattening, and full of sugar. Because your self control is inhibited, your caloric intake may increase.

Some studies show that inadequate sleep may lower your metabolism. One study even suggests that poor sleep can cause muscle loss. You may also feel less motivated to exercise.

All in all, your body performs at a higher level when you’re fully rested. Make quality sleep an important part of your routine, and you may notice fewer cravings, more energy, and a healthy weight change.

**Sources:**

* <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/sleep-and-weight-loss#section5>

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