



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Don't be a Night Owl

Perceived Insufficient Rest or Sleep Among U.S. Adults — United States, 2009

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[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the MMWR, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

If you're having trouble sleeping, rest assured you are not alone. Recent studies indicate that nearly one in three adults in the U.S. reported getting less than seven hours of sleep per night, and approximately 50 to 70 million Americans suffer from chronic sleep disorders.

Dr. Lela McKnight-Eily is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. She's joining us today to discuss ways to overcome sleeping problems. Welcome to the show, Lela.

[Dr. McKnight-Eily] Thank you.

[Dr. Gaynes] Lela, how much sleep does the average person require?

[Dr. McKnight-Eily] The National Sleep Foundation recommends that adults receive between seven to nine hours per night; school children aged 5 to 12 years, 10 to 11 hours; and adolescents aged 11 to 17 years, eight and a half to nine and a half hours.

[Dr. Gaynes] What's the difference between a few bad nights sleep and a serious sleeping problem?

[Dr. McKnight-Eily] Oh, anyone can have a few bad nights rest. Sleeping disorders are problems, however, tend to be more chronic in nature. For example, lasting for a month in the case of insomnia, and they tend to be characterized by a cluster of symptoms and signs, including difficulty sleeping and waking, sleep disorder breathing, or abnormal movements during sleep.

[Dr. Gaynes] Are sleeping disorders more common in any particular age or gender?

[Dr. McKnight-Eily] Patterns of sleep change throughout the life cycle. Notably, adolescents experience changes in their body rhythms that cause them to want to go to bed and wake up several hours later than before. Older adults typically awaken and go to bed earlier than younger adults. Some studies have found sleep disturbances more prevalent among older adults which appears to be impacted by health conditions, but we found that older adults who are also more likely to be retired make fewer complaints and adjust their perceptions of sufficient sleep.

There are gender differences, as well, and perceptions of sufficient sleep, as demonstrated by our study. This is an area that needs further research, however, women tend to report higher rates of

insomnia and perceived insufficient rest or sleep, while men have higher rates of obstructive sleep apnea.

[Dr. Gaynes] Lela, what causes sleep problems?

[Dr. McKnight-Eily] There are multiple causes of sleep problems. The major causes are overlapping and include lifestyle-occupational factors that reflect broad societal changes, like longer work hours; increases in shift work; greater access to technology; including the internet and television; and sleeping disorders.

[Dr. Gaynes] Can a lack of sleep lead to other health problems?

[Dr. McKnight-Eily] Oh sure. Sleep problems are associated with a number of health conditions, including chronic diseases, such as obesity; heart disease; diabetes and stroke; mental disorders, including depression and anxiety; as well as accidents, loss of productivity, injury, and mortality.

[Dr. Gaynes] If a person is having sleep problems, what should they do?

[Dr. McKnight-Eily] We recommend trying some simple behavioral techniques first, including setting a sleep schedule, such as going to bed and waking at the same time each day; sleeping in a dark, quiet, relaxed environment; avoiding caffeine, alcohol, stimulants, or exercise two to three hours before going to bed; and not eating for two to three hours before going to bed. However, if sleep problems persist, or you suspect that you may have a sleeping disorder, we recommend that you contact your local physician for an assessment. He or she may refer you to a sleep specialist, as well, and work with this person as a part of a team to treat your sleeping problem.

[Dr. Gaynes] Lela, where can listeners get more information about sleeping disorders?

[Dr. McKnight-Eily] www.cdc.gov/sleep

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Lela. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Lela McKnight-Eily about ways to overcome sleeping problems.

Remember, sleeping problems affect a person's productivity, both at work and at home and are associated with physical and mental problems, such as heart disease, obesity, and depression. If you are often having problems getting enough rest, consult your physician before lack of sleep results in more serious health issues.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.