Can Eating Less Salt Help Reduce Night-time Bathroom Trips?

April 4, 2017

Few things frustrate a healthy sleep cycle more than needing to urinate in the middle of the night. Now, new findings from Japan, recently presented at the European Society of Urology congress in London, suggests that too much salt in the diet may cause the common problem — known as nocturia — and that cutting back on sodium could help reverse the problem, the BBC reports.

For this latest study, researchers from Nagasaki University in Japan followed 321 volunteers who disclosed they ate a relatively high amount of salt and also suffered from sleeping problems. Scientists instructed the participants to cut back on salt in their diets and then followed their progress for a period of three months.

Among the 223 patients who were able to cut their salt intake during the study period, their incidence of nocturia dropped, on average, from more than twice each night to just about once. Conversely, for the 98 people in the study who consumed more salt than normal, bathroom trips became more common and increased from more than twice to almost three times during the night.

“This work holds out the possibility that a simple dietary modification might significantly improve the quality of life for many people,” said Matsuo Tomohiro, a medical doctor and professor at Nagasaki University Medical School.

Scientists noted that increased salt could mean more fluid intake during waking hours, as well as a possible buildup of fluid in the tissues, which could eventually trigger the annoying night-time routine. Tomohiro stressed, however, that larger studies were needed to confirm the link.

Additionally, nocturia is linked to an array of other age-related conditions, such as prostate enlargement in men and hormonal changes. Night-time urination can also be a sign of an underlying health problem, such as diabetes, heart disease or sleep apnea, so it’s important to consult with a doctor if you experience these symptoms.

Currently, doctors recommend that older adults eat no more than 6g of salt each day, or about 2,400 mgs of sodium denoted on the standard nutrition facts label.

Click here to learn more about how diets high in sodium and other processed ingredients can adversely affect your health.

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