Too Little Shuteye Is Bad News for Adults With Asthma

A lack of quality sleep gave rise to more days of poor physical and mental health, among other health problems.

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Poor sleep quality negatively affects young people with asthma, but what about adults with the respiratory illness? Well, a new study published in the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology's (ACCAI) journal Annals of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology reveals that adults with asthma who suffer from either sleep deprivation or an overabundance of rest face a greater risk for an asthma attack as well as other health problems, according to the ACCAI.

For the study, researchers surveyed 1,389 adults age 20 and older who self-identified as having asthma. Participants' were asked: "How much sleep do you usually get at night on weekdays or workdays?"

About 26% slept for up to five hours, while 66% clocked between six and eight hours of zzz's and about 8% slept nine or more hours. Individuals who slept for shorter periods of time were more likely to be younger and nonwhite, while those who snoozed longer were more likely to be older and female and to smoke.

Compared with eight-hour sleepers, those who slept less or more were more likely to report having had an asthma attack (45 percent vs. 59 percent and 51 percent, respectively), a dry cough or an overnight hospitalization in the past year. In addition, under- and over-sleepers visited their doctors more often and endured worse quality of life, including days of poor physical and mental health and inactivity due to poor health.

Those who slept longer also faced increased odds of activity limitation as a result of wheezing. However, researchers didn't find any significant differences in other patient-reported outcomes and health care visits between long and normal sleepers.

"Disturbed sleep in an asthma patient can be a red flag indicating their asthma isn't well-controlled," said Gailen D. Marshall, MD, PhD, allergist, ACCAI member and editor-in-chief of Annals. "This study adds solid evidence to the practice of asthma patients discussing sleep issues with their allergist to help determine if they need to change their asthma plan to achieve adequate sleep as a component of overall good asthma management,"

Marshall added that the findings “warn that consequences can be expected when sleep patterns are chronically inadequate.”

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