Poor-Quality Sleep Linked to Sexual Dysfunction in Older Women

Older women who don't sleep enough report a less enjoyable sex life than those who sleep well.

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Women over 50 who consistently fail to get a good night's sleep are more likely to experience sexual dysfunction, suggest new findings published in Menopause: The Journal of The North American Menopause Society, reports CNN.

The study involved more than 3,400 women with an average age of 53 who visited Mayo Clinics in Minnesota and Arizona. The women completed questionnaires about their sleep quality between December 2016 and September 2019.

Sleep quality was measured by the women's responses to questions about falling and staying asleep, using sleep medication, drowsiness during the day and other issues. In addition, researchers evaluated the women for sexual dysfunction and asked them to rate how unhappy they were with their sexual lives.

Findings revealed that women who didn't get at least five hours of sleep each night were more likely to lack interest in sex or receive pleasure from intimacy than those who got their zzz's. Researchers also found that on average, these women tended to report sexual problems to a greater degree.

Stephanie Faubion, MD, MBA, director of the Mayo Clinic's Center for Women's Health and the study's senior author, said the study results suggest that all primary care doctors should be asking women about their sexual function.

"Sleep may be something easier to talk about, and poor sleep is associated with so many negative outcomes, such as cardiovascular disease," Faubion added. "If she's not sleeping well, that leads you to the next question, because sexual function is probably suffering, too."

Conversely, women also should talk to their doctors about any sleep and sexual issues they have, she advised.

For related coverage, read "Snoring and Sleep Apnea Linked to Greater Risk for Heart Damage in Women."

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