

Sleep More and Weigh Less

How much you sleep and even the quality of your sleep may influence hormonal activity related to your appetite.

The Diet of Your Dreams! Lose Weight While You Sleep! Can you just picture a fit, well-groomed spokesperson screaming this at you from your TV during the middle of the night... just around the time you're dipping into that pint of Haagen-Dazs® because, let's face it, you can't sleep?

It's true! Substantial medical evidence suggests that how much you sleep and even the quality of your sleep may influence hormonal activity related to your appetite. Research shows that people who don't get enough sleep are more likely to have bigger appetites due to the fact that their levels of leptin (an appetite-regulating hormone) fall, thus encouraging an increase in appetite.

In patients with sleep apnea, there is also resistance to leptin, making it more difficult to control appetite and lose weight unless the sleep apnea is treated. Often, unrecognized sleep apnea patients continue to gain weight so that their condition progressively worsens until they're finally diagnosed.

This correlation between appetite and sleep offers further evidence that sleep and obesity are linked. Fatigue, sleep and hunger have very similar psychological characteristics. Thus, when you're feeling sleepy, you might feel the urge to head for the fridge instead of bed.

For many people, the lack of sleep creates a vicious cycle – the more tired you are, the more caffeine you'll consume to stay awake during the day; but the more caffeine you consume, the more difficult it is to fall asleep at night. This is not a healthy cycle.

Lastly, people who suffer from sleeplessness tend to be less motivated to diet or exercise – daytime sleepiness lowers energy levels and makes it hard to lose weight.

Thus, it's truly vital to treat a sleep disorder before starting an exercise and/or diet program to lose weight.

