

# **Sleeping Less May Be Related to Weight Gain**

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Lack of sleep could make you fat. In an editorial published in the Jan. 10 issue of the Archives of Internal Medicine, two Northwestern University researchers stress the need to better understand the growing epidemic of obesity in the United States by studying how loss of sleep alters the complex metabolic pathways that control appetite, food intake and energy expenditure.

Commenting on two obesity studies also published this week in the journal, Joseph Bass, M.D., assistant professor of medicine, and Fred W. Turek, Charles E. and Emma H. Morrison Professor of Biology and director of Northwestern's Center for Sleep and Circadian Biology, write: "In recent years, a new and unexpected 'obesity villain' has emerged, first from laboratory studies and now, as reported by Vorona et al in this issue of the Archives, in population-based studies: insufficient sleep. However, while there is a growing awareness among some sleep, metabolic, cardiovascular, and diabetes researchers that insufficient sleep could be leading to a cascade of disorders, few in the general medicine profession or in the lay public have yet made the connection."

As younger and older Americans alike struggle with an inability to get enough sleep and to control weight, the authors stress the need to investigate whether intervention in sleep disorders could help reduce obesity's negative effects on metabolism and health. In commenting on a second article appearing in the same issue of the Archives, Bass and Turek note that even school age American children are not obtaining enough sleep and that sleep loss during the formative years of life could

be putting our youth on a trajectory toward obesity and the metabolic syndrome.

Obesity is associated with metabolic and cardiovascular disorders often referred to as the metabolic syndrome, which increases an individual's risk of developing a serious disease, say Bass and Turek. In addition to excess body weight, factors include high blood pressure, high insulin levels and one or more abnormal cholesterol levels. According to the Mayo Clinic, as many as one in four American adults and 40 percent of adults age 40 or older have metabolic syndrome, an increase of 61 percent over the last decade.

Source: Northwestern University

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