

Don't acquire a sleep debt it must be paid!

By ACSH Staff — June 12, 2012

The effects of chronic sleep debt on a person's general health have become [better understood](#) [1], as research increasingly links inadequate sleep (six hours or fewer a night) with a higher risk of everything from heart attacks to weight gain. Now, a new study set to be presented at the annual meeting of the Associated Professional Sleep Societies has [linked](#) [2] insufficient sleep to stroke most notably, in adults at a healthy weight who had no other risk factors for stroke.

The study, authored by a post-doctoral fellow in sleep disorders and health outcomes at the University of Alabama, found that stroke risk was four times higher in adults who averaged less than six hours of sleep a night, versus seven to eight hours. The study focused on people whose body mass index (BMI) was normal and who were at low risk for sleep apnea. Furthermore, the 5,666 adults involved in the three-year study had no history of stroke.

As lead author Dr. Megan Rutter observed, "the body is stressed when it doesn't get the right amount [of sleep]." Indeed, while people tend to be aware that smoking, excess weight, and high blood pressure put them at risk for cardiovascular disease, few people are cognizant of the risks posed by chronic sleep deprivation.

And these risks may be widespread. A government study released in May found that 30 percent of working adults in the U.S. get six hours or fewer of sleep a night. Experts recommend seven to nine. "Increased awareness of the risks of chronic sleep debt might make it a lifestyle factor that more people will attend to," says ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross.

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