

The 41st Wink

Better Sleep For Life

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Sleep and Cognitive Health



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For people with sleep deprivation, insomnia, sleep apnea, or other conditions that prevent getting adequate rest, short-term daytime cognitive impairment is common.

In addition, multiple studies have linked poor sleep with longer-term cognitive decline, including the development of dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

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Better sleep can promote sharper thinking and may reduce the likelihood of age-related cognitive decline. There is evidence that improving sleep can offer a practical way to enhance both short and long term cognitive performance.

Researchers and public health experts are increasingly viewing that good sleep may reduce the longer-term likelihood of developing Alzheimer's dementia.



UNHEALTHY SLEEP AND THE BRAIN

Poor sleep can take many forms. It can be caused by short sleep duration and/or fragmented sleep. Both insufficient and interrupted sleep make it difficult to progress through sleep cycles in a normal, healthy way.

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Without sleep, the brain struggles to function properly. Because they don't have time to recuperate, neurons become overworked and less capable of optimal performance.

Sleep helps the brain clear out potentially dangerous substances like beta amyloid proteins, which cluster in plaques and worsen cognitive function. Studies have found that even one night of sleep deprivation can increase the amount of beta amyloid in the brain.

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The short-term implications of poor sleep on the brain and cognition can be the result of simply pulling an all-nighter, while those with chronic sleep problems may see their day-to-day tasks affected.

Without quality sleep, people are more likely to make errors, fail to take in new information, suffer deficits in memory, or have impaired decision-making.



The cognitive impacts of poor sleep can also create health risks, including life-threatening dangers from drowsy driving or operating heavy machinery without adequate sleep.

Sleep deprivation may also worsen symptoms of mental health conditions like anxiety and depression.



While a night of disrupted sleep may be inconvenient, the resulting daytime sleepiness can cause serious cognitive impairments. It reduces attention, as well as learning and processing ability.

A lack of sleep has also been found to induce effects that are similar to being drunk, which slows down thinking and reaction time.

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Poor sleep impairs memory consolidation by throwing off the normal process that draws on both NREM and REM sleep for building and retaining memories.

Studies have found that sleep deprivation increases the risk of forming false memories. Fragmented sleep has also been found to negatively affect memory even if there is adequate total sleep.

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The most obvious cognitive effects of poor sleep can be felt immediately, but mounting evidence shows that sleep influences the long-term risks of cognitive decline and dementia.

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An analysis of more than 25 observational studies found a considerably higher risk of cognitive impairment and Alzheimer's dementia in people with sleep problems. In fact, that analysis estimated that as many as 15% of cases of Alzheimer's dementia are attributable to poor sleep.

In people already diagnosed with dementia, poor sleep has been linked to a worse disease prognosis.