

Older adults less affected by sleep deprivation than younger adults during cognitive performance

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According to a research abstract that will be presented at SLEEP 2009, the 23rd Annual Meeting of the Associated Professional Sleep Societies, older adults are able to retain better cognitive functioning during sleep deprivation than young adults.

Results indicate that older adults (ages 59 through 82 years) showed more resiliency to total sleep deprivation (TSD) than young adults (ages 19 to 38 years) on a range of measures of cognitive performance, including working memory, selective attention/inhibition and verbal encoding and retrieval. Performance of young adults significantly declined on all three tasks during TSD while that of older adults did not change significantly.

According to principal investigator Sean Drummond, PhD, at the UCSD/VA [healthcare system](#) in San Diego, Calif., older adults may have performed better because only very healthy people were included from that age group, which may have caused a selection bias that does not exist in younger adults.

"It may be that older adults who remain the healthiest late in life are less vulnerable to a variety of stressors, not just sleep loss," said Drummond.

The study included 33 older adults and 27 younger adults. The performance of older and younger adults was compared on three distinct

cognitive tasks before and after 36 hours of sleep deprivation.

According to Drummond, sacrificing sleep to study or work is a false-trade off; findings of this study and many others show that [sleep deprivation](#) produces impaired performances across a variety of different tests.

Source: American Academy of [Sleep](#) Medicine ([news](#) : [web](#))

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