

Less than half of older Americans get the recommended 8 hours of nightly sleep

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Older Americans with depressive symptoms and poor mental health tend to get seven hours of sleep per night or less, according to new research.

Results indicate that 55 percent of the total study population reported sleeping on average for seven hours or less per night over the past month, and 61 percent reported a sleep-onset latency of 15 minutes or less. Older adults who were more educated, had higher household incomes, were black, reported more depressive symptoms, were more active, complained of difficulties maintaining [sleep](#), and complained of 'leg jerks' at night were the most likely to report more difficulty performing everyday functions as related to feeling sleep or tired.

According to lead author Karen Rose, PhD, at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, older adults who were unmarried, black and who reported having more difficulties with initiating or maintaining sleep had statistically greater odds of having a shortened sleep duration. People who reported [depressive symptoms](#) were also more likely to have short sleep durations.

"We were surprised by the fact that the self-reported amount of physical activity did not predict functional outcomes of sleep. We anticipated that people who reported lower levels of physical activity would have more difficulty with sleep-related functional outcomes," said Rose. "We were also surprised to find that reported numbers of hours slept each night did not predict whether or not an individual experienced poor functional outcomes as a result of being sleepy or tired."

The study involved data from 1,570 men and women who were 60 years of age or older, who had completed telephone or in-home surveys. Of the total sample, 61 percent were non-Hispanic white, 20.4 percent were non-Hispanic black, and 15 percent were Mexican-Americans. A diagnosis of sleep apnea was reported by 5.4 percent of participants, 18 percent reported feeling 'unrested during the day' as 'often' or 'almost always,' and 11 percent reported frequent use of sleeping pills.

According to authors of the study, [short sleep](#) duration is a serious concern for older adults, as it has been associated with cardiovascular disease, insulin resistance, and an increased risk for falling in this demographic.

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

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