

Quantity More Important than Quality for Adult Sleep

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Image source: Bertil Videt via Wikipedia.

(PhysOrg.com) -- For years, it has been thought that senior citizens don't require as much sleep as younger adults. However, a study at the University of California San Diego is turning that assumption on its head. For older folks, it appears that the amount of sleep they get is quite important when it comes to memory and other cognitive processing activities. What's not as important as we age is the quality of sleep we get.

Indeed, reports ScienceNews.org, sleep quality doesn't have much effect on [seniors](#) -- but it does matter to younger adults:

Sleep quality seemed to have no effect on performance, Drummond said. "For [older adults](#), the absolute minutes of sleep they got last night has a significant influence on performance today," he said.

On the other hand, in younger folks, the quality of sleep, and not the total amount, affected memory the next day, Drummond found. Young adults who slept in consolidated chunks performed better and had higher [brain activity](#) in certain regions than those who woke up frequently during the night, regardless of total minutes slept.

Apparently, as we age, we still need the same amount of sleep. Just because older sleepers tend to toss and turn more, doesn't mean they don't need as much sleep. In fact, if they don't get the same amount of sleep as they did when they were younger, they are more prone to memory problems. As a result, the study lead, Sean Drummond, points out that it is vital for seniors to concentrate on quantity of sleep. ScienceNews.org reports on his findings:

"Sleep last night does impact performance and [brain function](#) today, and it does so differently depending on whether you're in your mid-20s versus your mid-60s," he said. "Older adults need to get a certain amount of sleep. Young adults need to get that [sleep](#) in a consolidated chunk."

This is yet another example of the awareness we need as we age. Understanding our body's evolving needs as we age can help us live longer -- and with a better quality of life.

More information: "Older Adults' Brains Boosted By More, Not Better, Sleep," ScienceNews. Available online: www.sciencenews.org/view/gener...5/title/Older_adults%E2%80%99_brains_boosted_by_more,_not_better,_sleep

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