

## Poor sleep may not add to cholesterol problems, study finds

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(HealthDay)—Sleepless nights don't appear to be linked to an increase in

cholesterol levels, a new study indicates.

The exception seems to be people who take sleeping pills to treat [insomnia](#), the researchers said.

There has been speculation about a possible link between insomnia and [heart disease risk](#) factors such as [high cholesterol](#), because sleep apnea—another type of sleep disorder—has been linked to heart disease.

From the large U.S. National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, the researchers behind the new study reviewed data on more than 19,000 people. They looked at information from 2005 to 2008. In people over age 20, the researchers found 11 percent had elevated levels of "bad" LDL cholesterol. Twenty-two percent had low levels of "good" HDL cholesterol. Just over 16 percent had high levels of triglycerides, another unhealthy blood fat, the study found.

Overall, the study found that rates of abnormal cholesterol levels were about the same for people with insomnia and those without the sleep problem.

However, people with insomnia who took sleeping pills were 118 percent more likely to have high LDL cholesterol than people who took sleeping aids but didn't have insomnia, the study authors reported.

"The observed link between sleeping pill use and elevated LDL cholesterol is particularly concerning given the dramatic rise in the use of sedative medicine in the general population in recent years," study author Dr. Nicholas Vozoris, from St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto, said in a hospital news release.

Those who use [sleeping pills](#) may have more severe insomnia, which may contribute to their higher LDL [cholesterol levels](#), he suggested.

The study only found an association between sleeping pill use and cholesterol problems, however; it didn't prove cause-and-effect.

The study was published March 1 in the journal *Sleep*.

**More information:** The American Academy of Family Physicians has more about [insomnia](#).

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