

# Better sleep feels like winning the lottery

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Credit: Petr Kratochvil

Improving your sleep quality is as beneficial to health and happiness as winning the lottery, according to research by the University of Warwick.

Dr Nicole Tang in the Department of Psychology has discovered that working on getting a better night's sleep can lead to optimal physical and

mental wellbeing over time – and that quality of sleep is more important than how many hours you get.

Analysing the [sleep patterns](#) of more than 30,500 people in UK households across four years, Dr Tang finds that improving your [sleep quality](#) leads to levels of mental and physical health comparable to those of somebody who's won a jackpot of around £200,000.

The study shows that positive changes in sleep over time – improved quality and quantity, and using less [sleep medication](#) - are linked with improved scores on the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ), which is used by mental health professionals to monitor psychological wellbeing in patients.

People surveyed who reported positive improved sleep scored a 2-point change in the GHQ – a result comparable to those recorded from patients completing an eight-week programme of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy designed to improve psychological wellbeing.

Furthermore, the same people showed improved scores on the 12-Item Short Form Survey, which tests levels of physical and emotional health, as well as people's ability to perform everyday activities.

Conversely, it was found that a lack of sleep, bad quality sleep, and using more sleep medication can lead to worsened medical and emotional states.

Dr Tang's research proves that improving the quality and quantity of sleep amongst the population – as well as discouraging the use of sleep medication - is an effective, simple and cheap method of raising the health and wellbeing of society as a whole.

Consequently, she argues that working on getting good quality sleep, and

the reduction of sleep medication, should be promoted as a public health value – something that everyone can do easily to stay physically and mentally healthy.

Dr Tang comments:

"We are far from demonstrating a causal relationship, but the current findings suggest that a positive change in sleep is linked to better physical and mental wellbeing further down the line.

"It is refreshing to see the healing potential of sleep outside of clinical trial settings, as this goes to show that the benefits of better sleep are accessible to everyone and not reserved for those with extremely bad sleep requiring intensive treatments.

"An important next step is to look at the differences between those who demonstrate a positive and negative change in sleep over time, and identify what lifestyle factors and day-to-day activities are conducive to promoting [sleep](#). Further research in this area can inform the design of public [health](#) initiatives."

The paper, 'Changes in Sleep Duration, Quality, and Medication Use are Prospectively Associated with Health and Wellbeing: Analysis of the UK Households Study' is published in *SLEEP*.

**More information:** Nicole K. Y. Tang et al. Changes in Sleep Duration, Quality, and Medication Use Are Prospectively Associated With Health and Well-being: Analysis of the UK Household Longitudinal Study, *Sleep* (2017). [DOI: 10.1093/sleep/zsw079](https://doi.org/10.1093/sleep/zsw079)

Provided by University of Warwick

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