

# The health benefits of sleeping on your side

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(HealthDay)—You know how important getting enough restorative sleep is for facing each new day refreshed and ready to take on the world. Now research suggests that your sleep position may have an impact on

brain health, too.

For a study done on animals, researchers used dynamic contrast [magnetic resonance](#) imaging to see the brain's glymphatic pathway. That's the system that clears [waste](#) and other harmful chemicals from the brain, much like the way the lymphatic system clears waste from organs.

The researchers found that brain waste was cleared most effectively when sleeping on one side rather than on the back or stomach. This means that side sleeping could help reduce the risk of Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and other brain-based diseases. That's because a buildup of brain waste likely plays a part in these illnesses.

Many people naturally sleep on their side already. The researchers hypothesize that humans have adapted to this position over time precisely because it helps rid the brain of the waste that builds up during waking hours. While they caution that this type of MRI study needs to be done on people to confirm their initial findings, if you're a tummy or back sleeper, you may want to consider readjusting your [sleep position](#).

Four out of 10 people sleep not only on one side, but also in the fetal position, with torso hunched and knees bent, according to the National Sleep Foundation. The foundation cautions people not to sleep in too tight a fetal position, however, because doing so could restrict breathing.

And tummy sleepers should know that this position can lead to neck and back pain, numbness and tingling because of pressure put on joints and muscles.

**More information:** The National Sleep Foundation has more on [sleep position](#) pros and cons.



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