

# Long daytime naps might raise your odds for A-fib

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Daytime naps longer than a half-hour appear to nearly double a person's

risk of developing an irregular heartbeat, a new study reports.

People who nap 30 minutes or more a day have a 90% higher risk of developing the heart rhythm disorder atrial fibrillation (a-fib) than those who take shorter naps, according to research presented Thursday at a meeting of the [European Society of Cardiology](#), in Malaga, Spain.

"Our study indicates that snoozes during the day should be limited to less than 30 minutes," study author [Dr. Jesus Diaz-Gutierrez](#) of Juan Ramon Jimenez University Hospital in Huelva, Spain, said in a society news release. "People with disturbed night-time sleep should avoid relying on napping to make up the shortfall."

Research presented at meetings should be considered preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed journal.

A-fib causes the heart's upper chambers to beat irregularly, increasing a person's risk of stroke fivefold, the researchers said in background notes. It's the world's most common [heart rhythm disorder](#).

For this study, the investigators tracked more than 20,000 Spanish university graduates. Participants were divided into three groups: those who don't nap; those who nap less than 30 minutes; and those who nap 30 minutes or more each day.

During an average follow-up of nearly 14 years, 131 participants developed a-fib.

Those taking longer naps had nearly twice the risk of [atrial fibrillation](#) compared to those taking short naps, according to the first analysis. Meanwhile, folks who didn't nap did not have any elevated a-fib risk compared to short-nappers.

Looking more closely at short-nappers, the researchers found that those who napped for fewer than 15 minutes had a 42% lower risk of developing a-fib, while those who napped 15 to 30 minutes had a 56% reduced risk compared with long nappers.

"The results suggest that the optimal napping duration is 15 to 30 minutes," Diaz-Gutierrez said. "Larger studies are needed to determine whether a short nap is preferable to not napping at all."

He said there are many potential explanations for the link between napping and health.

"For example, long [daytime naps](#) may disrupt the body's internal clock (circadian rhythm), leading to shorter night-time sleep, more nocturnal awakening and reduced [physical activity](#)," he said. "In contrast, short daytime napping may improve circadian rhythm, lower blood pressure levels and reduce stress."

While the study found an association between naps and a-fib risk, it could not prove cause and effect.

**More information:** Harvard Medical School has more about the [health effects of napping](#).

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