

Study links obesity and poor sleep

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A new study has found people who sleep badly are also more likely to be obese.

James Cook University's Abdul-Aziz Seidu was a co-author of the new study. He said obesity was once considered a problem only for [high-income countries](#), but is now a serious public [health](#) concern worldwide.

"The [prevalence of obesity](#) has tripled within the last four decades, with 13% of the world's total population now classified as obese. In Australia,

the 2014/15 national health survey showed nearly 28% of the Australian adult population were obese," said Mr. Seidu.

The study aimed to assess whether poor sleep duration and quality are significant risk factors for obesity in Australian adults aged over 15.

Mr. Seidu said the team used the Household, Income and Labor Dynamics in Australia survey, which collects longitudinal data from more than 13,000 individuals within over 7000 households.

"We found the proportion of poor sleep duration—defined as less than 7 hours or more than 9 hours—among obese adults is 43%, compared to 32% among those with a healthy weight. Poor sleep quality among [obese adults](#) was measured at 36%," said Mr. Seidu.

He said poor sleep duration and quality boosts the secretion of hormones and exacerbates the risk of being obese, while lowering appetite-suppressing blood leptin levels and raising appetite-promoting blood ghrelin levels.

"From a behavioral perspective, the likelihood of unhealthy dietary habits is high among individuals who have poor sleep duration and quality," said Mr. Seidu.

He said obesity is strongly associated with the development of a raft of chronic health conditions and exacerbates the risk of mortality among people with existing [health conditions](#).

Mr. Seidu said more than 36% of survey participants in the survey reported poor sleep length and more than 28% poor sleep quality in 2021.

"Apart from its association with obesity, sleeping too little or too much

is also independently associated with a high risk of diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular diseases, while poor sleep quality is significantly associated with a high risk of depression."

"Enacting policies that raise public awareness of the significance of good sleep hygiene and encouraging healthy sleeping habits should be considered to address the alarming rise in the [obesity](#) rate and other direct effects of poor sleep."

Mr. Seidu said sleep is a complex multidimensional phenotype and further studies employing different study designs such as Randomized Clinical Trials are required to generate more evidence.

Provided by James Cook University

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