

Poor night's sleep can trigger atrial fibrillation the next day

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We all know that a lousy night's sleep can leave us feeling drained the next day. Now a study by UC San Francisco has found another reason to catch more Z's: poor sleep is tied to significantly higher odds of experiencing atrial fibrillation (A-Fib)—irregular heartbeats that can lead to blood clots, heart failure, stroke and other heart-related problems—the following day.

A bad night of sleep was associated with a 15% greater risk of having an A-Fib episode, and continued poor sleep was associated with longer episodes of A-Fib. The study was [published](#) in *JACC: Clinical Electrophysiology*.

The researchers noted that it is important to treat underlying disease that may be causing A-Fib, which is the most common type of arrhythmia—when the heart beats too fast or too slow or irregularly.

The new study shows that strategies to improve general [sleep quality](#) also may help.

"Treating insomnia can be challenging, but in many cases, there are things within an individual's control that can meaningfully improve sleep quality," said corresponding author Gregory M. Marcus, MD, MAS, a cardiologist and electrophysiologist at UCSF Health.

He suggested going to bed at a reasonable and at a consistent time, avoiding alcohol and caffeine before bedtime, using the bed only for sleep or romance, exercising regularly, keeping the room cool, avoiding naps and waking up at the same time each day.

Sleep quality: The good, the bad and the horrible

UCSF has long been a leader in cardiology treatment, including for heart rhythm disorders. Although the risks associated with A-Fib have been extensively investigated, this is the first time that researchers have seen an immediate connection to [poor sleep](#).

The study tracked 419 patients in the I-STOP-AFIB trial. They rated their sleep quality each night, as either "amazing," "good," "average," "bad" or "horrible," and used mobile electrocardiograms to measure A-Fib episodes the following day.

More information: Christopher X. Wong et al, Preceding Night Sleep Quality and Atrial Fibrillation Episodes in the I-STOP-AFIB Randomized Trial, *JACC: Clinical Electrophysiology* (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jacep.2023.09.009](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jacep.2023.09.009)

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