- Sleep

# Insomnia link to diabetes: study

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HAVING insomnia could increase the risk of type 2 diabetes, a new study by West experts suggests.
Those who have difficulty getting to sleep or staying asleep had higher blood sugar levels than people who rarely had sleep issues, the study of more than 336,999 UK adults found.
The findings suggest insufficient sleep can cause higher blood sugars levels and could play a direct role in the development of type 2 diabetes.
It is therefore thought that measures or treatments that improve insomnia could help to prevent or treat the condition.
According to scientists, the research indicates more than 27,000 adults in the UK with insomnia could be free from diabetes if their sleeping condition was addressed.
James Liu, senior research associate in the Bristol Medical School (PHS) and MRC integrative epidemiology unit (IEU) and corresponding author on the paper, said: "We estimated that an effective insomnia treatment could result in more glucose lowering than an equivalent intervention, which reduces body weight by 14kg in a person of average height.
"This means around 27,300 UK adults, aged between 40 and 70 years old, with frequent insomnia symptoms would be free from having diabetes if their insomnia was treated."
Current treatments for insomnia include cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), and short-term treatment of sleeping tablets or treatment with a hormone called melatonin if CBT does not work.
While previous studies have linked insomnia, not getting enough sleep, and having a later bedtime, to a greater risk of type 2 diabetes, the new study assessed whether these associations are explained by causal effects of sleep traits on blood sugar levels.
They looked at how five sleep measures, insomnia, sleep duration, daytime sleepiness, napping and morning or evening preference (chronotype), were related to average blood sugar levels assessed by a measure called HbA1c levels.
Researchers found that frequent insomnia symptoms cause higher HbA1c levels and, by implication, that insomnia has a causal role in type 2 diabetes.
Dr Faye Riley, research communications manager at Diabetes UK, said: "This new study, funded by Diabetes UK, gives us important insights into the direction of the relationship between sleep and type 2 diabetes, suggesting that insufficient sleep can cause higher blood sugars levels and could play a direct role in the development of type 2 diabetes.
"Knowing this could open up new approaches to help prevent or manage the condition.
"However, it's important to remember that type 2 diabetes is a complex condition, with multiple risk factors.
"Eating a healthy balanced diet, being active, along with getting enough sleep, are all essential components of good health for everyone, including those at risk of, or living with, type 2 diabetes."
Researchers say future studies to assess the impact of these insomnia treatments on glucose levels in people with and without diabetes could establish potential new treatments for the prevention and treatment of diabetes.
The study, led by the University of Bristol, supported by the universities of Manchester, Exeter, and Harvard, and funded by Diabetes UK, is published in Diabetes Care.