

Sleep plays a role in weight loss

By Mark S. Aloia, Huffington Post

Most people take a common set of steps when preparing to lose weight. Pick an activity. Pick a diet. Cut out junk food. Pick a start date. Recruit support. One step, however, is typically missed, and recent research suggests it is as important as anything: Review your sleep habits.

We all know how sleep can affect us. A poor night often results in complaints of low energy, poor work performance, and irritability. We may even recognize that we tend to be less active after a night of poor sleep – but most of us do not pay much attention to how sleep may affect our eating behavior.

Think carefully – do you ever crave certain foods after poor sleep? Personally, my sleepless nights are often followed by cravings for “comfort foods,” which can be high in fat and carbohydrates. And science confirms it. More and more scientific literature is pointing to a tie between the amount of food we eat, our food choices, and the time of day when we eat – all factors that could keep the number on the scale from dropping.

In experiments comparing short sleep duration (about five hours a night) to more normal duration (seven to eight hours a night), researchers have found that study participants who are forced to shorten their sleep crave the high fat or carbohydrate laden foods later at night, and they eat more than people who sleep longer.

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