How Good Sleep Can Boost Weight Loss

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Sleep may be just as important as diet and exercise to a healthy weight. People who get fewer than seven hours of sleep tend to weigh more. Are you one of the 40% of adults getting fewer than 7 hours of sleep a night or one of the 30% getting by on less than 6 hours?

Cutting short sleep time can increase weight. Here's how that works:

Poor Appetite Control
A lack of sleep gets the hunger hormones out of whack. There's more ghrelin (the hunger hormone), more cortisol (a stress hormone which can increase hunger), and less leptin (the fullness hormone). The change in these hormones can set up a raging appetite that difficult to tame.

A Foggy Brain
Skimping on sleep dulls decision-making and impulse control. Food looks more appealing because the reward centers of the brain become overstimulated. It's a double whammy - the brain craves the food and lacks the controls to make wise decisions.

More Calories
More calories come from the increase in hunger and appeal of food, dulling of fullness signals, and limited self-control that comes with a lack of sleep. Besides, having more time awake means more time to snack and does increase calorie intake.

A Sluggish Metabolism
Skimping on sleep hits the body with an immediate hit to the metabolism by slowing the rate at which the body burns calories. Long-term, a lack of sleep lowers muscle mass reducing metabolism further.

Less Motivation to Exercise

Exercise motivation is challenging for most after getting plenty of sleep. Without quality sleep, exercise suffers.

Cells Become More Resistant to Insulin

With only a few nights of poor sleep, the ability to regulate blood sugar plummets as cells become insulin resistant. Insulin resistance means higher blood sugar, more insulin, increased hunger, and more fat storage.

Make Sleep a Top Priority

Give sleep the attention it deserves. Here are some tips for improving your sleep:

- Follow a consistent bedtime routine
- Establish a relaxing setting at bedtime
- Shoot for 7-8 hours of sleep every night
- Stay away from caffeine or any other stimulants before bedtime
- Keep your mind off problems or worries at bedtime
- Avoid going to bed hungry or too full
- Exercise earlier in the day - not within six hours of bedtime
- Make your bedroom quiet, dark, and a little cool
- Get up at the same time every morning
- Turn off lights and electronics