

Sleeping for just 3-5 hours daily may increase type 2 diabetes risk: Study

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Getting good sleep is important to maintain good health (Image credit: Freepik)

People who sleep for only three to five hours daily may be at a higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes, according to a study.

The research, published in the journal JAMA Network Open, also shows that **chronic sleep deprivation** cannot be compensated by healthy eating alone.

“I generally recommend prioritising sleep, although I understand it’s not always possible, especially as a parent of four teenagers,” said Christian Benedict, Associate Professor at Uppsala University and lead researcher behind the study.

The team examined the link between type 2 diabetes and sleep deprivation. Type 2 diabetes affects the body’s ability to process sugar (glucose), hindering insulin absorption and resulting in high blood sugar levels.

A 2020 study showed that over 462 million people suffer from this disease. Over time, it can cause serious damage, particularly to nerves and blood vessels, and thus represents an **escalating public health problem** globally. “Previous research has shown that repeated

short daily rest increases the risk of type 2 diabetes, while healthy dietary habits such as regularly eating fruit and vegetables can reduce the risk,” said Diana Noga, a sleep researcher at the Department of Pharmaceutical Biosciences at Uppsala University.

“However, it has remained unclear whether people **who sleep too little can reduce their risk** of developing type 2 diabetes by eating healthily,” Noga said in a statement.

The researchers used data from one of the largest population databases in the world, the UK Biobank, in which nearly half a million participants from the UK have been genetically mapped and responded to questions on health and lifestyle.

They followed the participants for over 10 years and found that a **sleep duration of between three and five hours** was linked to a higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

In contrast, **healthy eating habits** led to a lower risk of developing the disease, but even people who ate healthily but slept less than six hours a day were still at higher risk of type 2 diabetes.

“Our results are the first to question whether a healthy diet can compensate for lack of sleep in terms of the risk of type 2 diabetes. They should not cause concern, but instead be seen as a reminder that sleep plays an important role in health,” Benedict added.