

Eat to dream: Study shows dietary nutrients associated with certain sleep patterns

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(Medical Xpress)—"You are what you eat," the saying goes, but is what you eat playing a role in how much you sleep? Sleep, like nutrition and physical activity, is a critical determinant of health and well-being. With the increasing prevalence of obesity and its consequences, sleep researchers have begun to explore the factors that predispose individuals to weight gain and ultimately obesity. Now, a new study from the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania shows for the first time that certain nutrients may play an underlying role in short and long sleep duration and that people who report eating a large variety of foods – an indicator of an overall healthy diet – had the healthiest sleep patterns. The new research is published online, ahead-of-print in the journal *Appetite*.

"Although many of us inherently recognize that there is a relationship between what we eat and how we [sleep](#), there have been very few scientific studies that have explored this connection, especially in a real-world situation," said Michael A. Grandner, PhD, Instructor in Psychiatry and member of the Center for Sleep and Circadian [Neurobiology](#) at Penn. "In general, we know that those who report between 7 - 8 hours of sleep each night are most likely to experience better overall health and well being, so we simply asked the question "Are there differences in the diet of those who report shorter sleep, longer sleep, or standard sleep patterns?"

To answer this question, the research team analyzed data from the 2007-2008 National Health and [Nutrition Examination Survey](#)

(NHANES) sponsored by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). NHANES includes demographic, socioeconomic, dietary, and health-related questions. The sample for the survey is selected to represent the U.S. population of all ages and demographics. For the current study, researchers used the survey question regarding how much sleep each participant reported getting each night to separate the sample into groups of different sleep patterns. [Sleep patterns](#) were broken out as "Very Short" (

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