

Power naps for insomniacs

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Flinders researchers are investigating whether power naps can cure insomnia. Credit: Shutterstock

Daytime naps may hold the key to treating insomnia, Flinders University researchers believe.

In a world-first study, Flinders Postdoctoral Research Associate Dr Nicole Lovato is recruiting patients to test the role of brief daytime sleeps as an adjunct [therapy](#) to improve the success of [sleep restriction](#) therapy, a main behavioural treatment for insomnia.

While sleep restriction is highly effective, Dr Lovato said many insomniacs struggle to adhere to the therapy due to significant daytime sleepiness.

"Sleep restriction therapy limits the time an insomniac is allowed to spend in bed to the time they report sleeping for," Dr Lovato, based at the Adelaide Institute for Sleep Health, said.

"Some insomniacs, for example, may be in bed for nine hours but report only sleeping for six so their time in bed will be restricted to six hours. This restriction of time in bed builds up their homeostatic need for sleep and helps them sleep

across the night," she said.

"Even though we know this treatment works very well, a lot of patients feel so sleepy that they find it difficult to adhere to their new bedtime, which is often much later than the time they normally go to [bed](#).

"We're hoping that daytime napping will make it easier for patients to adhere to their bedtime and get through the day while they're undertaking sleep restriction therapy."

As part of the study, eligible participants will be required to nap for no more than 20 minutes in the afternoon, before 5pm.

Unlike hour-long afternoon naps which can interfere with night-time sleep, Dr Lovato said short 20-minute sleeps result in immediate, short-term benefits that do not impact on sleep at night.

She said it is hoped the findings will uncover a new drug-free adjunct treatment to behavioural therapy.

"As [insomnia](#) can significantly impair daytime function and is associated with psychological effects such as depression and anxiety, anything we can do to improve treatments, especially non-drug treatments, is something we should focus on."

More information: People aged 18-85 who are interested in participating in the study can email: sleep@flinders.edu.au

Provided by Flinders University

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