

# Why Your Heart Loves Sleep

Heart disease is one of the leading causes of death in the world and has been for decades. There is strong evidence that long-term short sleep (less than 7 hours per night) is partly to blame for this. The effects of short sleep on the heart can be measured after just one night as well as after decades of chronically choosing to sleep less than the recommended 7 to 9 hours per night. Here's some evidence.

- After a night of less than 6 hours of sleep, your systolic blood pressure will be measurably higher because your heart rate will increase. (The experiment that found this result was conducted on young and fit people with a healthy cardiovascular system.) High blood pressure has a causal relationship with heart disease, among other ailments.

O. Tochikubo, A. Ikeda, E. Miyajima, and M. Ishii, "Effects of insufficient sleep on blood pressure monitored by a new multibiomedical recorder," *Hypertension* 27, no. 6 (1996): 1318-24.

- Large-scale studies that control for other known cardiac risk factors show a strong correlation between short sleep and developing heart disease, suffering a cardiac arrest, or dying from heart disease.

Walker, M. (2017). *Why We Sleep*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster. p. 165.

- Most studies investigating deficient sleep over the last 50 years have observed an overactive sympathetic nervous system. This causes a prolonged version of the fight-or-flight response, which the body is maladapted to deal with. The general effect is to increase symptoms associated with heart disease and decrease the body's ability to combat it.

Walker, M. (2017). *Why We Sleep*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster. p. 167-168.

- Daylight savings time provides some of the most striking evidence of the impact of short sleep on our bodies. Hospital records show a spike in heart attacks the day after we all lose an hour of sleep. Similarly, when we gain an hour of sleep, the heart attack rates are much lower the following day.

Walker, M. (2017). *Why We Sleep*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster. p. 169.

Sleeping well is one of the easiest and most effective ways we can take care of ourselves. Don't wait for your doctor to give you bad news to make being a healthy person a priority.