Is There a Link Between Diabetes and Insomnia?

by AFRA WILLMORE

Dealing With Diabetes and Insomnia

There is almost nothing worse than not getting enough sleep. It can affect your whole life — work, relationships and your social life.

Some people can get to sleep easily enough but wake in the small hours and then cannot get back to sleep. Some lie in their bed for hours willing sleep to come, finally dropping off just before the alarm sounds.

Others sleep fitfully, unable to get enough good quality sleep to rest properly. Insomnia and other sleep disorders are serious — sufferers can become depressed or even suicidal.

If you are suffering from lack of sleep you cannot attribute to a new baby, snoring partner, or party-mad neighbors, have you thought it might be linked to diabetes Research has shown that diabetes and insomnia can be linked.

It’s one of those catch-22 situations. Sleep can affect your blood sugar levels and your blood glucose control can also affect your sleep.

People who regularly lack sleep will feel more tired through the day and more likely to eat comfort foods (and other foods diabetics should avoid). Also, a good night’s sleep is important for our hormones to regulate a large number of the body’s processes, such as appetite, weight control and the immune system.

Keep on reading to learn more about the relationship between diabetes and insomnia, and ways to achieve better sleep.

The Connection Between Diabetes and Insomnia

Difficulty getting a good night's rest could come down to a number of reasons. It might be you are suffering from low blood sugar episodes at night or that your blood sugar levels are too high.

Low blood sugar can cause headaches, hunger and night sweats, which can all disrupt sleep.

Failing to keep blood glucose and body weight/body mass index in recommended parameters can also be an issue causing sleep apnea. A 2009 study published in Diabetes Care found that 86% of people with diabetes also experience sleep apnea, with 55% reporting moderate to severe apnea warranting treatment.

High blood sugar long term can also cause symptoms of neuropathy like restless leg syndrome, which can range from irritating to downright painful, particularly during the night.

Lethargy and insomnia can both be triggered by poor blood sugar control. Simply put, if you have blood sugar

levels that are either too high or too low overnight, you may find yourself tired throughout the next day.

Learning How to Sleep Better

Sorting out a good diabetes management plan can be a key in re-establishing a healthy sleep pattern. If necessary, book an appointment with your diabetes healthcare team to explain your issue and get expert help.

Keeping your blood glucose under control is the main way of trying to get back into a normal nighttime pattern. It could be as simple as cutting out the need to nip to the bathroom in the night; high blood sugars are known to increase the need to urinate, so getting as near to normal blood readings as possible might mean an end to midnight comfort breaks.

Take a close look at your diet and be honest with yourself. Are you eating a healthy, balanced diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables and not too many processed foods and sugary or carb-heavy treats?

Or has the odd glass of wine with dinner crept up to a bottle or two on the weekend? It doesn’t take much to send blood sugar levels soaring and set you up for a sleepless night.

Losing weight may help sleep quality, especially if those extra pounds are causing your sleep apnea or snoring.

Maybe you are not eating enough, especially before going to bed. Skipping your evening meal leaves a long gap without refueling, which could cause blood sugar levels to fall dangerously low during the night.

At best this can interrupt your sleep, and at worst you could slip into a coma, which could prove fatal in extreme cases. So even if you are not hungry make sure you have eaten something like a small banana or some high-fiber, low-sugar breakfast cereal before retiring to bed.

If you think there is nothing you could change about your diet, maybe it is time to incorporate more exercise into your routine.

As well as helping regulate blood sugars, exercise will help tire you out. As a bonus, it is much harder to physically eat a donut while running, swimming or playing sports!

Aside from diabetes-related solutions, you could also check that your mattress is not too old.

They should be changed every seven to 10 years — a good rule of thumb is if you have started to wake with aches and pains which disappear over the course of the day it is probably time to buy a new mattress.

Don’t use laptops, mobile phones, tablet computers or other screens just before going to bed (unless you are reading this in bed of course — you should finish this article then turn your gadget off).

Your room should not be too warm or too cool and ideally there should be ventilation — think about opening a window slightly, and the room should be dark and quiet. Invest in ear-plugs and/or sleep mask if necessary. Sweet dreams!