

By Dan Shapley

Buzz up!

Recent years have brought forth a flurry of research indicating that the simple formula of eating less and exercising more to lose weight isn't the whole story. We all know people who seem to be able to eat whatever they wish and not gain weight and others who eat very little and workout rigorously only to keep struggling with stubborn fat.

What is the answer. Of course, it has a great deal to do with that mystery of mysteries, our metabolism, which like everything is influenced both by one's genetics and one's environment. We can't do much about our genetics but we can do some things about the environment. Our nutritional intake and our exercise routines are obvious things to consider, but I do want to focus on one this month that may not be at all obvious to us but appears to be a factor that scientists believe may be affecting whether or not we put on weight

Lack of Sleep



Cutting-edge sleep researchers are learning that our round-the-clock schedules may impact our health in surprising ways. While scientists don't yet know why, studies continue to show that those who don't get enough deep restful sleep tend to gain weight.

Whether or not losing sleep makes you [feel hungrier and eat more food](#) (some [do](#), some [don't](#)) something about losing sleep changes the metabolism. Faced with a sleep deficit, we metabolize [more lean muscle and less fat](#). Even if we burn calories during exercise, we [struggle to lose weight](#).

The result? According to [one study](#), people put on three pounds in less than two weeks just by having their sleep interrupted. The results of sleep deprivation show up in as few as a couple nights without deep restful sleep. And [BMI](#), the official measure of weight, increases steadily as the sleep deficit increases.

What you can do:

We all know what makes us lose sleep -- too much to do, too much coffee (or [alcohol](#)), too much [late-night television](#) or [video gaming](#), a little too much "quality" [time with our Blackberries](#). We can't control everything that wakes us up or takes away our sleep -- the crying baby can't be ignored -- but we can control many of them.

How much sleep do you need? The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [recommends](#) 7-9 hours for adults, while some experts have said 6.5-7.5 may be [closer to the ideal](#).

How Much Sleep Do I Need?

While there is variability between each of us in how much sleep we need, the National Sleep Foundation has noted that the need for sleep changes as we age. The National Sleep Foundation has recommended the following sleep guidelines for selected age groups (*including naps):

INFANTS	
(0–2 months)	10.5–18 hours*
(2–12 months)	14–15 hours*
TODDLERS/CHILDREN	
(12–18 months)	13–15 hours*
(18 months–3 years)	12–14 hours*
(3–5 years)	11–13 hours*
(5–12 years)	9–11 hours
ADOLESCENTS	
	8.5–9.5 hours
ADULTS	
	7–9 hours

(Taken from the National Sleep Foundation Web site.)

For further information—and a more comprehensive listing of recommended hours of sleep for different age groups—please see the National Sleep Foundation Web site at <http://www.sleepfoundation.org/site>*