



# HEALTH NOTES



amen  
Adventist Medical  
Evangelism Network

AMEN's mission is to motivate, train, and equip Seventh-day Adventist health-care professionals to team with pastors and members, uniting the church to restore Christ's ministry of healing to the world, hastening His return. To learn more about AMEN and get involved go to: [amensda.org](http://amensda.org).

**Principal contributor:** Elvin Adams, MD

## Sleep Affects Disease

**A GOOD NIGHT'S REST** is an important contributor to health. It is well known that sleep apnea is harmful to health, but the amount of time spent sleeping turns out to be important as well.

In the United States about 45% of the population has risk factors that predispose them to develop heart attacks, strokes and other vascular diseases. Another 14% survived their first stroke or heart attack, though often with significant residual disabilities.

Sleep duration has some influence on the development of disease for those who have various risk factors for the development of disease, but much more on those who already have disability from disease. The population in this country is almost evenly divided between those who get less than 6 hours of sleep a night and those who get 6 or more hours of sleep each night.

A recent study<sup>1</sup> looked at the interplay of sleep duration and the development of heart attacks, strokes, and cancer among those who have risk factors for the development of cardiovascular diseases.

The study population was 1,654 adults with an average age of 47.5 equally divided between men and women of whom 89.8% were white. These were followed for 19.2 years. At the beginning, a careful medical history was obtained including psychological factors such as depression, suicidal ideation, loneliness, and marital problems. The use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco, and caffeine were documented. A complete physical was performed, and the sleep habits of each individual was determined in a sleep laboratory.

At the beginning of the study 594 were in good health with no risk factors, 828 were healthy but had significant risk factors for cardiovascular disease, and 232 had already experienced and survived a heart attack or stroke. At the end of the study, 512 had died, of which 209 had died of a heart attack or stroke and 131 had died of cancer.

It was not surprising that those who had already experienced a heart attack or stroke were more likely to die of a second heart attack or stroke, but sleeping less than 6 hours also had a significant impact on the development of cancer. Those who slept less than 6 hours were nearly **three times** as likely to develop or die of cancer compared to those who slept 6 or more hours per night.

For those who were healthy to begin with but had risk factors for cardiovascular disease, getting **less than 6 hours of sleep** had an **83% higher risk** of dying from a heart attack or stroke compared with only at **35% increased risk** of dying if the person got **6 or more hours** of sleep each night.



The healthy people with risk factors who got less than 6 hours of sleep were also **2½ times more likely** to develop cancer than those people with risk factors who got 6 or more hours of sleep a night. **Getting a good night's sleep is important for good health.** With a good night's sleep, you are less likely to develop a heart attack, stroke, or cancer.

**THE BIBLE** speaks of the good night's sleep that comes from trusting in the Lord. "When you lie down, you will not be afraid; yes, you will lie down and your **sleep will be sweet**. Do not be afraid of sudden terror, nor of trouble from the wicked when it comes; For the Lord will be your confidence."  
—Proverbs 3:24-26 (NKJV)

**ELLEN WHITE** stressed the importance of sleep: "The importance of **regularity** in the time for eating and **sleeping** should not be overlooked. Since the work of building up the body takes place during the hours of rest, it is essential, especially in youth, that sleep should be regular and abundant."  
—Education, p. 205

"One of the most fruitful sources of shattered constitutions among men is a devotion to the getting of money, an inordinate desire for wealth. They narrow their lives to the single pursuit of money, **sacrifice rest, sleep**, and the comforts of life to this one object. Their naturally good constitutions are broken down, **disease sets in** as a consequence of the abuse of their physical powers, and death closes the scene of a perverted life."  
—Temperance, p. 140

---

<sup>1</sup>J. Fernandez-Mendoza, et.al, "The interplay of Objective Sleep Duration and Cardiovascular and Cerebrovascular Disease on Cause-Specific Mortality" Journal of the American Heart Association. July 30, 2019. 10 pages.