

**Client:** University of Warwick  
**Source:** The Daily Telegraph (Main)  
**Date:** 05 May 2010  
**Page:** 9  
**Reach:** 685177  
**Size:** 204cm2  
**Value:** 5110.2



# Less than six hours' sleep could be deadly

**By Rebecca Smith**  
**Medical Editor**

PEOPLE who regularly sleep less than six hours a night are more likely to die early, researchers have found in a study they claim provides "unequivocal evidence" of a link between sleep deprivation and premature death.

They found that people who slept for less than six hours each night were 12 per cent more likely to die before the age of 65 than those who slept the recommended six to eight hours a night.

The team from the University of Warwick and the Federico II University Medical School in Naples analysed 16 studies involving a total of 1.3 million people.

They noted that previous studies had shown that sleep deprivation was associated with heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity, type 2 diabetes, and high cholesterol. However, the researchers also found that sleeping too much was linked to an early death.

Those who slept for more than nine hours a night were 30 per cent more likely to die early, the research published in the journal *Sleep* found.

The findings directly contradict research published in the same journal last week which suggested that people who slept for 10 hours or longer a night were more likely to live to 100. This was thought to be because people who lived into extreme old age were healthier and therefore slept better.

However, the authors of the latest research suggested that sleeping longer was a sign of underlying illnesses such as depression and low levels of physical activity. Some cancer treatments are also associated with sleeping for longer.

Prof Francesco Cappuccio, the leader of the Sleep, Health and Society Programme at the University of Warwick and Consultant Physician at the University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust, said: "Whilst short sleep may represent a cause of ill health, long sleep is believed to represent more an indicator of ill health.

"Modern society has seen a gradual reduction in the average amount of sleep people take, and this pattern is more common among full-time

workers, suggesting that it may be due to societal pressures for longer working hours and more shift-work.

"On the other hand, the deterioration of our health status is often accompanied by an extension of our sleeping time. Consistently sleeping six to eight hours per night may be optimal for health."

Prof Cappuccio said that if short sleep did cause ill-health then there were 6.3 million people in Britain who may die early because of their lack of sleep. "What we are trying to say here is that sleep is an environmental factor that is important in health.

"Our objective would be to help people understand that sleep is being overlooked as a potentially important public health factor."

The average Briton sleeps for around seven hours, but several hours either side of this is normal, Prof Jim Horne, the director of Loughborough University's Sleep Research Centre, has said.