

# Good sleep improves memory

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Do you always sleep well or are you sleep deprived?

A researcher from Baylor University discovered from his study on 50 years of sleep research that sound sleep in young and middle-aged people helps memory and learning, but as they hit their 70s, 80s, and 90s, sleep is no longer linked so much to memory.

That raises an “alluring question” – whether improving sleep early in life might delay, or even reverse, age-related changes in memory and thinking, said Michael K. Scullin, director of Baylor University’s Sleep Neuroscience and Cognition Laboratory.



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“It’s the difference between investing up front rather than trying to compensate later,” said Scullin, assistant professor of psychology and neuroscience in Baylor’s College of Arts & Sciences. “We came across studies that showed that sleeping well in middle age predicted better mental functioning 28 years later.”

The article said the benefits of a sound night’s sleep for young adults are diverse and unmistakable. One example is that a particular kind of “deep sleep” called “slow-(brain)-wave-sleep” helps memory by taking pieces of a day’s experiences, replaying them and strengthening them for better recollection.

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By the time people reach middle age, more sleep during the day, such as an afternoon nap, also helps people’s memory and protects against its decline – as long they don’t skimp on nighttime sleep.

But as they grow older, people wake up more at night and have less deep sleep and dream sleep – both of which are important for overall brain functioning, Scullin said.

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“People sometimes disparage sleep as ‘lost’ time,” he said. But even if the link between sleep and memory lessens with age, “sleeping well still is linked to better mental health, improved cardiovascular health and fewer, less severe disorders and diseases of many kinds.”

*Reference:*

*“Sleep, Cognition, and Normal Aging: Integrating a Half Century of Multidisciplinary Research,” Michael K. Scullin, Donald L. Bliwise, Perspectives on Psychological Science, January 2015; vol. 10, 1: pp. 97-137.*