

Fewer hours of sleep bring problems galore

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Health experts have confirmed that Mumbaikars, particularly youngsters and working professionals, are sleep deprived. At least 93% of urban Indians are sleep-deprived, which makes them prone to a host of diseases, a Philips-AC Neilson survey has found.

Among the most prevalent sleep-oriented disorders is obstructive sleep apnoea, which is characterised by airway collapse behind the tongue. This can cause snoring or difficulty in breathing, which leads to gasping and choking. Sleep apnoea causes headaches, a shortened attention span, memory loss, poor judgment, lethargy, and sleepiness.

“OCA can be easily diagnosed by doctors and can be treated. The data on snoring in India is scarce. One study in Delhi ranged it from 4-9% while one of our studies suggests 10-13% prevalence. Snoring is more among obese people. Since OSA occurs more in obese people with thick neck (due to fat deposition) it is likely to be more among the urban affluent compared to the urban poor or rural poor,” Dr Anoop Misra, director of diabetes and metabolic diseases in Delhi’s Fortis Hospital, said.

People between 25 and 40 have problems like lethargy, weakness, depression, and fatigue. “What they don’t realise is that for most of them the sole reason for their problems is lack of sleep,” Dr Prashant Chhajed, chest physician and an expert on sleep-related disorders, Saifee Hospital, said.

Dr Sujeet K Rajan, a consultant in respiratory diseases at the Bombay Hospital, said about 40% of patients who walk into his clinic suffer from sleep deprivation.

“But none of them come to me saying they get inadequate sleep. They come with problems like diabetes, pulmonary tuberculosis, and viral infections caused because of low immunity,” he said. Call centre employees, corporates, and even doctors, suffer from inadequate sleep. “Most of my patients tell me they have deadlines to meet,” Rajan said.

Philips is in talks with some of the top hospitals like Mumbai’s SS Raheja Hospital, Nanavati and Asian Heart Foundation to set up ‘sleep labs’. Many of the top hospitals already have sleep labs with machines that detect exact problem with a person’s sleeping habit.

An adult human, doctors say, needs seven to eight hours of sleep. The ideal sleep is described as falling asleep quickly, followed by a long period of deep sleep and a quick, refreshing waking-up.

Students below 18 have problems of sleep deprivation. Parental demands leave children with little time for sleep. “I get children who start their day at 6am. After attending school, tuition, hobby classes, they return home around 8pm,” Dr Indu Khosla, paediatrician and sleep expert at PD Hinduja Hospital, said. “Once home, they spend time doing home work and watching television. They go to sleep around midnight.”

(With inputs from Vineeta Pandey)

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