
Poor Sleep May Put You At Greater Risk Of Developing Alzheimer's

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Disrupted sleep may be one of the missing pieces in explaining how a hallmark of Alzheimer's, a sticky protein called beta-amyloid, starts its damage long before people have trouble with memory, researchers reported Monday at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference.

"It's very clear that sleep disruption is an under-appreciated factor," said Dr. Matthew Walker of the University of California, Berkeley, who presented data linking amyloid levels with people's sleep and memory performance. "It's a new player on the scene that increases risk of Alzheimer's disease."

Sleep problems are treatable -- and a key next question is whether improving sleep can make a difference in protecting seniors' brains.

"Sleep is a modifiable factor. It's a new treatment target," Walker said.

Enough sleep is important for good health generally -- seven to eight hours a night are recommended for adults. When it comes to the brain, scientists have long known that people who don't get enough have trouble learning and focusing. And anyone who's cared for someone with dementia knows the nightly wandering and other sleep disturbances that patients often suffer, long thought to be a consequence of the dying brain cells.

The new research suggests that sleep problems actually interact with some of the disease processes involved in Alzheimer's, and that those toxic proteins in turn affect the deep sleep

that's so important for memory formation.

"It may be a vicious cycle," said Dr. Mirosław Mackiewicz of the National Institute on Aging, who wasn't part of the new work.

For the complete story, [go here](#).
