

People Need Less Sleep as They Age, Study Suggests

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Getting older isn't all bad. New research from the University of Lausanne in Switzerland found the older population needs less sleep than younger counterparts, and feels more awake during the day.

Published Aug. 13 in *Annals of Medicine*, the team studied 6,733 participants aged 35 to 75, all randomly selected. Any individuals with a declared sleep disorder were excluded from the study. Data on individuals' sleep patterns were assessed through a variety of methods ranging from questionnaires to sleep study.

Results revealed that older populations went to bed earlier and got up earlier, and despite reporting less overall sleep, they complained less about sleepiness — and pathological sleepiness is significantly lower in older patients than in younger participants. This suggests they may actually require less sleep.

The time it takes to fall asleep at night increases with age, but only for women. Both men and women saw a decrease in sleep efficiency as they age, meaning they are more likely to wake up during the night. However, older participants reported better sleep quality and daytime functioning. Lead researcher Gianina Luca and colleagues, suggest two potential reasons for this: "One possible explanation for

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better rating of daytime and sleep quality is an adaptation of expectations about sleep in older populations, or an acclimatization to sleep changes over time.”

Overall the research suggests that people will be more satisfied with sleep quality and patterns as they grow older, will feel more refreshed, and as a result will function better during the day.

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