

Sleep Disruption Not Only Makes You Tired, It Does This Too

When we're in pain, we have a hard time sleeping. That's bad enough. But it turns out that sleep disruptions do more than just make us tired and irritable.

UC Berkeley scientists in a study published in the January 28, 2019, issue of *The Journal of Neuroscience* found that a [sleep-deprived brain intensifies and prolongs pain sensations](#).

Results show that when study participants were sleep-deprived, they had a 120% increase in the activity of their somatosensory cortex, the brain region that interprets how pain feels.

They also had a 60% to 90% drop in activity in their striatum and insula, two brain areas that when activated typically decrease the perception of pain.

To make matters worse, they also found that lack of sleep decreases the activity in the area of the brain, the nucleus accumbens, that helps to relieve pain by increasing dopamine.

"Sleep loss not only amplifies the pain-sensing regions in the brain, but blocks the natural analgesia centers, too," says study senior author Matthew Walker, a UC Berkeley professor of neuroscience and psychology

The scientists noted that lack of sleep makes the body less resilient and that by improving sleep, people can experience less pain.

It is noted that the results clearly show even very subtle changes in nightly sleep counts. Even those small disruptions that we think would not have an impact, actually cause a

distinct impact on next-day pain.

“If poor sleep intensifies our sensitivity to pain, as this study demonstrates, then sleep must be placed much closer to the center of patient care,” says Walker.

A 2015 National Sleep Foundation poll found that [two in three chronic pain patients suffer from recurring sleep disruptions.](#)

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