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## **Too little sleep a health nightmare for many Chronic sleep loss making us fatter and sicker, CDC warns**

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WASHINGTON - With late-night TV watching, Internet surfing and other distractions, Americans are getting less and less sleep, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said on Thursday. And all this sleeplessness can be a nightmare for your mental and physical health, CDC experts cautioned, calling sleep loss an under-recognized public health problem. Sleep experts say chronic sleep loss is associated with obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke, cardiovascular disease, depression, cigarette smoking and excessive drinking.

The CDC surveyed 19,589 adults in four states. Ten percent reported they did not get enough sleep or rest every single day of the prior month, and 38 percent said they did not get enough in seven or more days in the prior month. The CDC survey was conducted in New York, Hawaii, Delaware and Rhode Island, asking people how many days in the prior month they got insufficient rest or sleep, without asking specifically how many hours they slept.

But the CDC released nationwide data collected separately showing that across all age groups, the percentage of adults reporting sleeping six hours or fewer a night increased from 1985 to 2006. The National Sleep Foundation recommends adults get seven to nine hours of sleep a night. Children ages 5 to 12 should get nine to 11 hours and those 11 to 17 need 8-1/2 to 9-1/2 hours.

"At night, we're doing everything except for sleeping — we're on the Internet, we may be watching TV. With these new lifestyles we have kind of taken sleep for granted as something that we can do when we have time or we can catch up on it on the weekends," CDC behavioral scientist Lela McKnight-Eily, who led the study, said in a telephone interview.

### **'Getting worse'**

"We don't realize that sleep is a vital part of overall health and that chronic sleep loss is related to both physical and mental health issues," she added. "It's getting worse." Darrel Drobnich, National Sleep Foundation chief executive officer, added that several thousand people die on

U.S. roads yearly in accidents involving drowsy drivers. "Americans are definitely sleep deprived. They don't get the amount that even they say that they want," Drobnich said.

The CDC said 50 to 70 million Americans suffer from chronic sleep loss and sleep disorders in a country of 300 million. The CDC four-state survey found that younger adults are more likely than older adults to report getting too little sleep. It also found overall that 30 percent of respondents said they got enough sleep every day of the past month, and 33 percent got too little on one to six days in the prior month. Lela McKnight-Eily urged people who often get too little sleep to see a doctor to see whether lifestyle issues are to blame or whether they might have a sleeping disorder. People can also try to establish a regular sleep schedule and avoid caffeine or other stimulants before bedtime, she added.