We get it: Sleep is good for you. The National Sleep Foundation regularly campaigns to “celebrate the health benefits of sleep,” and experts have been touting sleep’s value so as to lessen important factors that diet and exercise.

Adequate sleep has been linked to stroke, obesity and heart disease. But sleeping too much also has its risks: It too, is associated with a higher risk of heart disease and obesity, so it merits the same degree of concern as those other factors.

“Insufficient sleep has been linked to a variety of disorders, including uncontrolled obesity and a higher risk of diabetes,” says Kristen Knutson, a psychologist who is leading the hunt for an explanation, at the University of Chicago’s Department of Medicine. “And the operative term here is “regularly,” meaning the issue isn’t the occasional night of poor sleep but rather a consistent pattern of insufficient sleep.”

Most experts say that a healthy amount of sleep for an adult is to nine or ten hours a night. But the average adult in the U.S. manages seven and a half hours of sleep per night, leaving most people with a sleep debt that, under particular circumstances, can lead to trouble.

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“The idea of sleep debt is that you have a baseline and if you’re sleeping less than you should be that baseline is changing in some fashion,” says Lisa Bailey, a睡眠 deprivation specialist at the University of California, Davis. “So, you have sleep debt accumulated over the last week, the last month, the last year.”

Experts try to explain cases of paralysis

BY BRIAN PALMER

When someone who is healthy and fit for their age suddenly loses the ability to move, it often leaves doctors scratching their heads. When a woman in California lost control of her entire body in this way in 2012, doctors had no explanation for why she suddenly could not move.

“I have a scenario where someone is perfectly fine and then this happens,” says Dr. Geraldine Badger, a neurologist at the University of California, Davis. “So, it’s a real mystery.”

The patient, a 27-year-old woman, was in a car accident that left her with a severe neck injury. She was taken to the hospital, where doctors found that she had a severe injury to her neck and that she was paralyzed from the neck down.

The doctors were unable to find a cause for the paralysis, and the patient was left with no way to communicate. She was able to move her hands and feet, but she was unable to speak or move her head.

“She was completely dependent on others for everything,” says Dr. Badger. “She was unable to eat, drink, or care for herself.”

The patient was eventually able to communicate with doctors using a system of light waves. She would move her head to indicate which letters she wanted to spell out, and the doctors were able to understand her messages.

“I was able to spell out the word ‘paralysis’ using light waves,” says Dr. Badger. “It was a very difficult process, but it was the only way I could communicate with her.”

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