

## Press release

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# Poor sleep is common among Australians new study shows

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One in three Australian adults regularly struggle with their sleep according to a new study of national sleep habits.

The Roy Morgan study of more than 1,500 Australians aged from 14 to over 70 years was commissioned by the recently launched Sleep Health Foundation, a new national charity set up to raise awareness of the importance of sleep and the consequences of sleep deprivation.

Dr David Hillman, Chair of the Sleep Health Foundation, said the research highlights that Australians do not always prioritise sleep even though it is as important to well-being as regular exercise and a healthy diet. Between the ages of 25 and 65, the study shows that the average Australian gets around seven hours sleep on week nights, well below the recommended eight hours. On weekends their average sleep length increases to seven and a quarter hours, which is insufficient to catch up.

“This research shows us that Australians are not always getting the right amount of sleep and we need to make sleep one of our top healthy living priorities. Sleep is like a bank account. Everyday you draw on the balance and if you don’t deposit around eight hours a night you end up overdrawn,” Dr Hillman said.

The study also shows that overall one third of Australians wake up feeling unrefreshed at least several mornings a week. Furthermore:

- 19 per cent suffer from a partner’s snoring at least several nights per week
- 35 per cent wake frequently during the night
- Around 10 per cent of the adult population suffers from chronic difficulty falling asleep or can’t get back to sleep once awake (insomnia)
- Around 5 per cent suffer from obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA)

Younger Australians also appear to be more likely to be in need of a good night’s sleep. The research highlights that almost one half (44 per cent) of young adults (aged 18 to 24) wake up feeling unrefreshed at least several mornings a week. This is more than in any other age bracket and double the rate (19 per cent) of over 65 year olds.

“This research shows that younger Australians have the greatest trouble getting adequate sleep. We need to know more around the impact of social media on our sleep patterns and how mobile devices and computers may be affecting our younger population,” Dr Hillman said.

The research identified a number of other trends including that almost one quarter of Australians are experiencing fatigue or exhaustion and 19 per cent experience sleepiness that interferes with daily activities at least several days a week.

“Excessive sleepiness can cause health, family and social problems, decreased productivity at work and at home, and increased risk of accidents, both on the road and in the workplace,” Dr Hillman said.

Besides causing excessive daytime sleepiness, there is evidence that sleep disorders such as obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA) can lead to serious health complications including hypertension, heart disease and stroke.

“Better sleep must become a national health priority. Thirty per cent of road accidents are fatigue or inattention related, and shift workers are at twice the risk of work-related accidents,” Dr Hillman said.

The Sleep Health Foundation is Australia’s first charity set up to increase community and industry awareness around the importance of a good night’s sleep and the consequences of sleep loss.

“Despite the fact that we spend such a large part of our lives sleeping, the importance of sleep and the impact of sleep disorders are not always appreciated by the community,” Dr Hillman said.

For more information on ‘sleeping smart’, visit <http://www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au/>.

### **Notes to editors**

1. The Sleep Health Foundation ([www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au](http://www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au)) is a newly founded community-based charity strongly supported by clinicians and scientists. Its purpose is to raise awareness of sleep health issues and to promote their prevention and control through advocacy, public education and support of research. It receives funding from various corporate sources but is not affiliated with any entity.
2. The National Sleep Health Survey was undertaken on behalf of the Sleep Health Foundation by Roy Morgan Research Pty Ltd in late 2010. 1,512 Australians aged from 14 to over 65 were surveyed with quotas set to ensure accurate representation across age groups, gender and states.

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