

Study: Eating Fewer Calories May Have a Huge Impact on Sleep, Mood and Sex

By Paige Towers • May 3, 2016 at 4:43pm

[SHARE ON FACEBOOK](#) [TWEET](#) [TUMBLR](#) [EMAIL](#)

If you've ever tried losing weight before, then you know the amount of selfdiscipline needed to eat less each day, let alone the selfdiscipline needed to merely set that cheeseburger down right this second,

can be daunting. But what if there was more incentive beyond just lower numbers on a weight scale to inspire you to cut the calories?

The results of a new study

might just provide those reasons. The study, which was run out of

LSU's Pennington Biomedical Research Center and published in JAMA Internal Medicine

, reveals how restricting your daily caloric intake may have other surprising longterm benefits — including how well you sleep and how well you feel when you wake up.

The aim of the study was to test the effects of calorie restriction on variables beyond just weight loss. Thus, researchers recruited 220 participants in their thirties or early forties who fell within a normal BMI range. Then, they divided

them into two groups: One group was instructed to restrict their average daily calorie intake by 25 percent over a period of two years; the other, which served as a control, was instructed to eat as they normally do. (Meaning, they were not required to put those cheeseburgers down.)

Over two years time, participants in the calorie restriction group reported positive effects on their psychological wellbeing.

Researchers then regularly administered selfreport questionnaires to participants that asked them to rate their sleep, mood, sexual function and general quality of life on a given scale.

As it turns out, most participants in the group that had been instructed to restrict calories had — you guessed it — a bit of trouble with the task. Therefore, the average actual caloric restriction amount landed at about 12 percent instead of the requested 25.

Yet, even with their subjects not meeting that 25 percent restriction goal, researchers still gathered many encouraging results. Over two years time, participants in the calorierestriction group reported positive effects on all of those variables they'd been asked to report back on.

iStock by Getty Images

That's right — those who consumed less calories showed significant improvement in their moods, sex drives, stress levels and overall quality of life after just two years. But perhaps even more remarkably, those participants also reported improved sleep duration and better sleep quality after just one year.

Also, the cherry on top of all of this (although a nonfood related analogy may arguably work better here), is that the calorie restricting group did improve their waistlines as well: participants lost an average of 10 percent of their body weight.

**But perhaps even more remarkably,
those who cut calories also reported**

improved sleep duration and better sleep quality after just one year.

So why is this a big deal? Researchers believe that this is the first study of its kind where longterm calorie restriction in adults with normal BMIs was monitored to search for psychological wellbeing, not just physical. These results may just be the first of their kind to show that eating few calories isn't just about the changes we see in the mirror.

At this point, there is still more research to be done. For instance, whether the improvement in psychological health is due specifically to calorie restriction, or just weight loss in general, is unable to be determined at this time.

Additionally, the study was limited in scope; roughly 70 percent of participants were female and over threequarters were white.

But for now, this study provides one more incentive for those wanting to lose weight. Laying off those calories might just make for a better night's sleep and a happier disposition.