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Nightmares: What's Really Keeping You From Sleep



Having frequent nightmares is linked to insomnia and depression, among other factors, according to new research. The study, published in the journal *SLEEP*, involved about 14,000 adults in Finland. The subjects filled out detailed surveys about their sleep habits, health and depression symptoms.

Insomnia was strongly associated with having nightmares frequently in the past month, the results found. Severe depression was also linked to bad dreams. Fewer than 2 percent of people without depression reported having nightmares often. But more than 28 percent of those with severe depression symptoms had scary dreams.

Most nightmares may be a normal reaction to stress. Many researchers believe that they help people work through traumatic events. Some people have "repeated nightmares" which is a series of nightmares on a similar and recurring theme. Nightmares usually begin in children by the age of 10. They tend to be more common in girls than boys, and often continue into adulthood.

Nightmares Tied to Mind and Body Issues

Many other factors were associated with nightmares in the study, including:

- ⌘ Headaches
- ⌘ Exhaustion
- ⌘ Negative self-image related to depression
- ⌘ Being overweight or obese

Previous research backs up the findings. Prior studies found that nightmares are linked to anxiety disorders, sleep problems and mood disorders.

Seek Help to Sleep Soundly

If you're not getting a good night's sleep, let your doctor know. Sleeping well improves your quality of life, mood and physical health. Your doctor can check to see if a medication or medical condition may be causing your sleep trouble. He or she can also suggest treatment to help you snooze more soundly.

Sources: Sleepfoundation.org; Psychologytoday.com