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Night-time Acid Reflux Can Significantly Impact Sleep

Science Daily — According to results of a survey presented at the 72nd Annual Scientific Meeting of the American College of Gastroenterology, nighttime acid reflux, along with some of the less typical manifestations or symptoms of gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), is associated with significant sleep impairment.

In a recent national survey, researchers assessed the prevalence of sleep impairment among people with GERD and people without GERD based on response to an Internet survey of a general population of U.S. adults. Using a validated GERD screening tool, 701 respondents were identified with GERD and the remaining were controls.

Bonnie Dean, MPH, PhD, of Cerner LifeSciences, Ronnie Fass, MD of the University of Arizona and their research team found that sleep impairment was more common among people with GERD (41.9 percent) than those without GERD (19.4 percent). Researchers found that 49.5 percent of respondents with nighttime GERD reported sleeping poorly often or most of the time, compared to 36.7 percent of people with daytime GERD.

Using the survey, researchers also assessed sleep impairment among patients experiencing frequent nighttime atypical manifestations of GERD. In this case, Dr. Dean and her colleagues evaluated the subgroup of respondents with GERD, as identified using the validated GERD screener. They found that atypical manifestations or symptoms of GERD (i.e. coughing, sore throat, snoring, wheezing, choking, and chest pain) were common among those with acid reflux. Of GERD patients, 74 percent had at least one nighttime atypical manifestation.

For almost every daytime and nighttime atypical manifestation assessed, more than 20 percent of GERD patients reported their occurrence as frequent (more than 2 days or nights per week). Researchers also found that sleep impairment was more common among GERD patients with atypical manifestations compared to GERD patients with only typical or classic symptoms such as heartburn and acid regurgitation. For eight of the nine nighttime atypical manifestations assessed, the proportion of GERD cases reporting sleep impairment was significantly higher for GERD cases with the atypical manifestation compared with GERD cases without the atypical manifestation.

"Awareness of nighttime reflux, atypical manifestations, and associated sleep complaints should allow more complete evaluation and treatment of GERD patients," said Dr. Dean about this project.

Tips for Calming Nighttime Acid Reflux Heartburn and other gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) symptoms experienced during the night commonly cause sleep disturbances, including arousal from sleep, increased wakefulness and overall poor sleep quality.

Here are several tips to help reduce nighttime acid reflux so you can sleep better:

- Sleep with your head and shoulders elevated
- Wear loose-fitting clothes
- Wait 2 to 3 hours after eating to go to sleep
- Avoid foods that trigger heartburn

Note: This story has been adapted from material provided by American College of Gastroenterology.