

Sleepy during the day? Struggle with sleep apnea? Both are genetically linked to telomeres, parts of your chromosomes that reflect biological age

A predilection for afternoon naps does not necessarily mean you need to worry about your own mortality, but the scientific evidence is increasingly clear: The [timing](#) and [quality](#) of your sleep play an integral role in your body and brain health. And according to new research, there may be a link between sleep and longevity, too.

The new findings suggest that a condition called Excessive Daytime Sleepiness is linked to one of the most important genetic markers for longevity, a little section of DNA found on the end of [chromosomes](#) called a [telomere](#).

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Telomeres are often compared to the little piece of plastic on the end of your shoelace that keeps it from fraying. They sit on the ends of chromosomes and serve to [protect](#) the other DNA strands in the chromosomes that replicate each time a cell divides. Every time this happens, the telomeres get a little shorter. In turn, telomeres have been [described](#) as an “indicator of biological age,” because shorter telomeres are linked to risk for [cardiovascular](#) disease, cognitive [decline](#), and even bone [loss](#).

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Though the findings link daytime sleepiness with shorter telomeres, and in turn, with a higher risk of cardiovascular problems, what kind of difference in length translates to effects on “real life” isn’t yet known.

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