

SLEEP AND WEIGHT GAIN

Posted on July 18, 2013 by



Categories: [Health and Wellness](#), [Postpartum fitness](#), [Sleep](#), [Weight loss](#)

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[image source](#)

While on the topic of sleep, I figured I'd just share a recent experience I had. For those of you who tuned off from the baby sleep posts but still are hanging around hoping I'd post something worth reading sometime soon, this ones for you!

I have been going on and on about sleep. The reason it's been such an issue for me lately is that I hadn't been getting much.

Bootcamp is shut because of the rain and because of a wedding in my family I couldn't go to yoga class for a couple of weeks. I kind of vegetated after a very long time because of the numerous things going on, and didn't focus on getting regular exercise. With the result I found I was not tired at night, therefore sleeping later and waking later. Then I started stressing because I took ages to fall asleep and that kept me awake some more!

I went through almost two weeks of lying awake for hours. Firstly I wasn't tired, secondly I knew how important sleep was so I stressed that I was not sleeping, thirdly N started waking more (sleep regression) and I got antagonized because I waited for him to wake, and once he did I could not go back to sleep for long after he fell asleep. I was in a haze for a while there.

Then one day I decided to do some HIIT at home. I did 10 jump squats, 10 pushups, 8 burpees, thrice and that night I slept well. I also restarted yoga around then and came to [this conclusion](#) about N's sleep, all of which helped me sleep better.

But in those two weeks where I lost sleep my belly ballooned and I felt like my metabolic syndrome was surfacing again. I never felt this much bloat through out pregnancy or anytime postpartum. In fact this is how my belly looked 1 week postpartum.



Since I have had enough and more practice in listening to my body and understanding it, I am pretty sure the bloat was not due to the lack of exercise, though my carb cravings resurfaced and I was binging at 3 and 4 am because of sheer boredom.

I have since solved my sleep problems because I quit worrying about my baby's sleep, and started some form of physical activity in the day, **and in a matter of days my tummy bloat disappeared.**

Belly fat is a sign of metabolic syndrome and this has been something that has plagued me before going primal in my [PCOS days](#). There is a sure [connection](#) between sluggish metabolisms, insulin resistance, weight gain and PCOS and I have solved these problems since going primal.

While diet and exercise are the oft mentioned culprits for most hormonal and weight issues, if you aren't sleeping well most of your work in the other spheres amount to naught. **The next time you gain belly fat or weight, or just aren't able to lose weight in spite of your best efforts, think about**

how you've been sleeping lately.

This is how sleep causes weight gain or hinders weight loss:

- 1) [Insulin](#) sensitivity decreases even more than it is, reducing our ability to tolerate carbs and burn fat and making it hard to lose weight.
- 2) Secretion of hormones is not normal when you have lack of sleep. So testosterone, which is important for general health and growth hormone secretion, is interrupted. [Growth hormone](#) is important as it **burns fat and builds lean muscle** without which you will not lose weight and will gain some. When the levels of growth hormone are high you will burn fat easily as your metabolism is higher. The biggest spike in growth hormones occurs during deep sleep.
- 3) Leptin and ghrelin are two other hormones that are affected by lack of sleep. Leptin is responsible for suppressing hunger whereas ghrelin stimulates your appetite. Lack of sleep lowers the levels of leptin in your body and heightens the levels of ghrelin.
- 4) Sleep deprivation causes a spike in the stress hormone – [Cortisol](#). It sets off an increased rush of glucose from your tissues and even breaks down muscle tissues. In response to the rise in glucose comes the rise in insulin leading to **insulin resistance**. In the meantime cortisol is signaling the body to store fat, as the body may need it in times of acute stress. **The body stores fat in the abdomen**, around the organs specifically.

Simply put, lack of sleep is a potent stressor, which means it increases the catabolic glucocorticoid family of hormones like cortisol and decreases the anabolic triad of testosterone, IGF-1, and growth hormone, effectively accentuating the "degradation pathways" while reducing the "protein synthesis pathways."

[Source](#)

This is one of the reasons for postpartum weight gain. I believe that a lot of women after having babies gain weight in the year following the baby though she may not have gained much weight during the pregnancy itself – Lack of sleep!

Knowing my body well, I know that I cannot lose weight when I have less sleep and in fact I gain weight though I am trying hard to eat well and exercise. If you gain or lose weight quickly then you will probably be more prone to gain weight when you go a few days with poor sleep. When I talk about getting sleep here, I am talking about good quality sleep not the type where you fall asleep with the TV on and wake up to noise and light.

So, if you are thinking about changing your lifestyle, getting on the path of being healthy, trying to lose weight, or wondering why you are gaining weight, please analyze your sleep and make that a priority!

Thanks for reading!

