

Regular Insomnia and Anxiety Medications Increase Mortality Risk by 36%



The results of a new Canadian study show that taking insomnia and anxiety medications can increase the risk to die early by 36%

A comprehensive Canadian study that looks at 12 years' worth of [Statistics Canada](#) data has concluded that taking medications to treat insomnia and anxiety increases mortality risk by 36%.

Genevieve Belleville, a professor at [Université Laval](#)'s School of Psychology, published her finding in the September edition of the [Canadian Journal of Psychiatry](#).

Belleville arrived at these results through analysis of over 14,000 Canadians in Statistics Canada's National Population Health Survey. The data includes information on the social demographics, lifestyle and health of Canadians age 18 to 102, surveyed every two years

between 1994 and 2007. She also considered the possibility that depression, alcohol and tobacco consumption, physical health and physical activity level could contribute to mortality rates and controlled for these factors.

Respondents who reported having used medication to treat insomnia or anxiety at least once in the month preceding the survey had a mortality rate of 15.7%. Respondents who reported not having used such medications had a rate of 10.5%.

A number of hypotheses have been put forward to explain the link between use of these medications and increased mortality. Sleeping pills and anxiolytics affect reaction time, alertness and coordination and are thus conducive to falls and other accidents. They may also have an inhibiting effect on the respiratory system, which could aggravate certain breathing problems during sleep. These medications are also central nervous system inhibitors that may affect judgment and thus increase the risk of suicide.

“These medications aren’t candy, and taking them is far from harmless,” Belleville said in a statement. “Given that cognitive behavioral therapies have shown good results in treating insomnia and anxiety, doctors should systematically discuss such therapies with their patients as an option. Combining a pharmacological approach in the short term with psychological treatment is a promising strategy for reducing anxiety and promoting sleep.”