

Do Weighted Blankets Have Health Benefits?

寒い時期になり、夜の過ごし方や眠りについて考えることが増えてきましたよね。夜なかなか眠れないときや、気持ちが落ち着かないと感じることはありませんか。重さのあるブランケットが、そうした場面で使われることがあるとして関心を集めています。実際に使っている人の感じ方や専門家の見方から、重たいブランケットならではの特徴や、気をつけたい点も少しずつ分かってきます。気分を整えたいとき、無理のない安全な方法として、あなたはどんなことを取り入れていますか？



Mary Conlon (AP)

1. Article

Read the following article aloud.

From VOA Learning English, this is the Health & Lifestyle report.

When her husband gave her a weighted blanket to help her sleep, Rhonda James did not think it would work. In other words, she was skeptical. But five minutes after covering herself with the blanket, she was asleep.

“It felt like a really big hug,” said James. She is a banker who lives in Charleston, South Carolina.

As temperatures drop, a weighted blanket can be a popular choice to help you keep warm. But some people say the extra pressure of the cover also helps to ease their worries and fall asleep faster.

However, research on the [effectiveness](#) of weighted blankets is limited. The Associated Press recently reported on what is known about weighted blankets.

First, what is a weighted blanket?

Weighted blankets are filled with small glass balls, cotton or another filling. This makes them heavier than usual blankets.

Scientists may not know exactly how the blankets comfort, but they have a few ideas.

The heavy, even feeling from a weighted blanket may calm the brain's fight-or-flight response, said Dr. Neal Walia. He is a sleep medicine expert at University of California, Los Angeles Health.

He said, "The evenly distributed weight on you tells your body..." you are in a "...calm environment."

The extra pressure also may cause the brain to release the hormone oxytocin. Sometimes called the "love hormone," the body creates oxytocin during loving moments, such as hugging. Oxytocin can also lower anxiety, Walia said.

How do you use a weighted blanket?

For most healthy adults, experts say to choose a blanket that is about 10 percent of your body weight.

However, the blankets are not good for everyone.

For example, some people may find them too hot to use, especially during warmer weather.

People with breathing problems or [disorders](#) such as sleep apnea should check with a doctor before using a weighted blanket.

Experts say to not use weighted blankets for children under three years old. The weight can limit their movement and breathing.

Some people may not be able to buy them. They can be costly. A quality weighted blankets can cost between \$50 to over \$300. This depends on the size, weight and material.

Some people use them for other reasons than sleep. Rhonda James gets under her blanket to relax as she watches television or drinks a glass of wine.

Lucy Taylor, a writer from Wales, also uses a weighted blanket. Her anxiety increases during the winter. So, she uses her blanket during cold months to fall asleep. She says when her body is relaxed, her mind relaxes too.

Can weighted blankets improve sleep?

There is little scientific research on whether weighted blankets help with sleep, anxiety, or other health issues. The [studies](#) that exist involve small groups of people. And most of the study subjects are people with conditions including sleep problems, long-term pain, and mental and developmental disorders.

A study on 120 people with insomnia, an inability to get enough sleep, found that the weighted blankets helped them sleep better compared to a light blanket.

Another study considered 67 children with the developmental and brain disorder autism. That research found that weighted blankets did not affect the children's sleep at all. However, it also found that the study subjects liked the weighted blankets more than non-weighted blankets.

A third study on 94 adults with [chronic](#) pain found that a heavier weighted blanket did not affect sleep. But it was better at reducing pain than a lighter blanket.

So, there is not much scientific [evidence](#) to support health improvement claims about weighted blankets. However, in most cases they also cannot hurt, sleep experts say.

Dr. Daniel Barone is a sleep medicine expert at Weill Cornell Medicine in New York City. He suggests the use of weighted blankets to his patients after they try other traditional treatments and medicines.

"If it doesn't hurt and it may help, it's worth a shot," he said.

And that's the Health & Lifestyle report.

I'm Anna Matteo.

Adithi Ramakrishnan reported this story for The Associated Press. Anna Matteo adapted it for VOA Learning English.

2. Key phrases and vocabulary

First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

1. effectiveness (n.) the ability to produce the result you want

We questioned the effectiveness of the plan after several problems appeared.

2. disorder (n.) a problem with the mind or body that makes it work in an unusual way

The study included people with a mental health disorder.

3. study (n.) a research project that tests an idea

The study showed that the new schedule worked better.

4. chronic (adj.) continuing for a long time or happening again and again

People with chronic pain often have trouble getting a good night's sleep.

5. evidence (n.) facts or signs that show something is true

The photos were evidence that he had been there.

3. Questions

Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. What is inside many weighted blankets that makes them heavier than usual blankets?
2. About how heavy do experts suggest a weighted blanket should be for most healthy adults?
3. Which people should check with a doctor before using a weighted blanket, according to the report?
4. Would you try a weighted blanket to help you sleep? Why or why not?
5. What other safe methods do you use to relax when you feel worried or stressed?