...ly wants to sleep danger

A LACK of sleep can make you feel wretched the next day - but new research suggests it may also have serious health implications later in life.

A US study has found that poor sleep may be linked to the creation of deposits in the brain that are a precursor to Alzheimer's disease.

Washington University, examined people aged between 45 and 80 with no memory problems, half of whom had a family history of Alzheimer's.

It was found that about 25 per cent of participants had pre-clinical Alzheimer's - evidence of amyloid plaques, a type of protein deposit, in the brain.

Such plaques, which are thought to cause brain cell damage, form in Alzheimer's disease about 10 to 15 years before symptoms appear.

People who slept badly, either waking up very frequently or spending a lot of their time in bed awake, had a higher chance of having plaques.

The study's author, Dr Yo-El Ju, a Washington University neurology professor, says: "We all have so many obligations or habits that cut into our sleep, so we really have to make an active decision to make the time and effort to get good sleep."

Professor Kevin Morgan, director of the Clinical Sleep Research Unit at Loughborough University in the UK says there are likely to be many reasons for the association between sleep and good health. "For one thing, people who sleep badly tend to have compromised immune systems," he says.

Various studies have also suggested a link between lack of sleep and increased blood pressure, the risk of heart conditions, cancer and diabetes.

Research shows that people who estimate they sleep for shorter or longer periods than an average of seven hours a night will die earlier than those who are in the middle of the spectrum, explains Morgan.

SLUMBER SOLUTIONS

Dr Yo-El Ju's tips for getting a better night's sleep:

- Go to bed and get up at the same time every day.
- Avoid caffeine after mid-afternoon.
- Exercise during the day deepens sleep at night. However, exercising just before bedtime may wake the body up.
- If you have persistent sleep problems, seeing a sleep specialist can be helpful.