FOOD AND SLEEP

Learn how the food you eat can affect your sleep.

Have you ever wondered why certain foods make you feel energized while other foods make you feel tired? Understanding how foods and beverages affect your body can make a significant impact on your ability to fall asleep.

Foods that can help you sleep.

Tryptophan

Tryptophan is an amino acid that can help promote sleep. It is found in dairy foods such as milk, cheese and yogurt, and can also be found in:

- Nuts and seeds
- Bananas
- Honey
- Eggs

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrate-rich foods may also help you feel sleepy.* A small bowl of cereal with low-fat milk or a small piece of cheese with whole-grain crackers are great bedtime snack options.

Foods that can hinder your sleep.

Caffeine

For better sleep, it's best not to have caffeine within four to six hours before bedtime.* And that doesn't just mean coffee. Caffeine can also be found in:

- Chocolate
- Cola
- Energy drinks
- Tea
- Decaffeinated coffee
- Some medications

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Alcohol

Many people use beer, wine or other alcoholic beverages at bedtime to help them relax and fall asleep. Although alcohol may help in the short term, it can disrupt sleep patterns over the course of the night and impact the deeper stages of sleep. This may cause you to wake up still feeling tired.

If you drink alcohol, limit it to up to one drink per day for women and up to two drinks per day for men.** To help lessen the effects of alcohol when drinking at night, try to drink a glass of water for each alcoholic beverage you have. And ideally avoid alcohol four to six hours before bedtime.*

Spicy foods

Spicy foods can cause discomfort from indigestion or heartburn, making it difficult to fall asleep. It's best to avoid any heavy or spicy meals at least four hours before bedtime.*

Protein

Protein-rich, high-fat foods take longer for the body to digest. And since digestion slows down during sleep, it's best to avoid them before bed.

QUICK TIP: It's not just what you eat or drink, it's also when.

Avoid eating a big meal or drinking a lot before your regular bedtime to help you get a sound sleep.

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* WebMD. "Foods that Help or Harm Your Sleep." http://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/ss/slideshow-sleep-foods (last reviewed September 11, 2019).

** U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. "2015–2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans." 8th Edition. December 2015. http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015 (last updated October 17, 2019).

This is general health information and not medical advice or services. You should consult your doctor for medical advice or services, including seeking advice prior to undertaking a new diet or exercise program.

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