



Eat Your Way to a Good Night's Sleep

Ever find yourself tossing and turning at night, or waking up feeling exhausted even after a full night's sleep? The connection between sleep and what you eat might surprise you. How well you sleep—and even how much—can be influenced by your diet. Understanding how these two are connected can help you take control of your rest and your overall health.

How Are Sleep and What You Eat Connected?

Lack of sleep doesn't just leave you feeling groggy—it messes with your hunger hormones. When you're short on sleep, your body produces more ghrelin (the hormone that makes you hungry) and less leptin (the one that tells you you're full). This imbalance leads to cravings for sugary, fatty foods, which give you quick energy but leave you feeling even more tired in the long run.

It's not just about how much you sleep; the quality of your sleep matters just as much. Even after eight hours, you might wake up tired if your sleep quality is poor. A well-balanced, nutrient-dense diet can play a big role in improving both. Diets rich in whole foods—like vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and lean proteins—promote better sleep by providing the essential nutrients your body needs to regulate sleep cycles. In contrast, diets heavy in processed foods, added sugars, and fast foods can lead to restless sleep and leave you feeling fatigued, even after a full night in bed.

The key to supporting better sleep isn't just in specific foods but in maintaining overall diet quality. Prioritizing nutrient-dense foods while limiting added sugars, processed snacks, and fast food can help you achieve a restful, rejuvenating night of sleep, setting the stage for better health.

Practical Tips for Better Sleep

- Avoid heavy meals or caffeine within a few hours of bedtime. Large meals can keep you awake, and caffeine stimulates the nervous system when you're trying to wind down.
- Stick to a regular sleep schedule, even on weekends. Consistency is key to training your body's internal clock.
- Limit alcohol, especially in the evening. While alcohol might make you feel drowsy initially, it disrupts your sleep cycles later in the night, leading to fragmented sleep and early wake-ups. It's best to avoid it closer to bedtime.
- Magnesium and potassium are two minerals that help muscles relax. Maximize foods rich in these minerals for better sleep. Try bananas, avocados, leftover potatoes, carrots dipped in hummus or nut butter, or even some lentil or black bean soup.
- There really is science behind that glass of warm milk (or plant milk) at bedtime. Foods rich in tryptophan can boost serotonin, a hormone that promotes sleep. While turkey and dairy are well-known sources, many nutrient-dense, fiber-rich foods also contain tryptophan, including chia seeds, pepitas, cashews, walnuts, pistachios, soy products, and leafy greens.
- If your stomach starts to growl late at night, try sleep-friendly snacks like a handful of almonds, a small bowl of oatmeal, a banana, a few bites of cottage cheese, or a spoonful of peanut butter.
- Watch out for blue light from screens before bed. Phones, tablets, and computers emit blue light, which tricks your brain into thinking it's still daytime. This delays the production of melatonin, a hormone your body naturally produces when it gets dark. Melatonin signals your brain that it's time to wind down and sleep. Too much blue light blocks this signal, making it harder to fall asleep. Try turning off electronics at least an hour before bed.
- Hydrate throughout the day, but cut back on liquids right before bed to avoid waking up in the middle of the night to visit the bathroom.

By focusing on both diet quality and sleep habits, you can wake up feeling more energized, focused, and ready to take on the day.

Tofu Chocolate Pudding



Rich in magnesium from chocolate and tryptophan from tofu, this surprisingly creamy dessert makes the perfect bedtime treat to satisfy late-night cravings.

Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup maple syrup
- 8 ounces extra firm or firm silken tofu
- 4 ounces semisweet chocolate, melted
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Pinch of salt (optional)

Squeeze as much water as you can out of the tofu.

Place tofu in a blender or food processor. Add remaining ingredients and process until smooth, stopping to scrape down the side every few seconds. Give it a taste -- it will be just a little sweet. Add another teaspoon or two of maple syrup if it needs more sweetness.

Place in 4 serving bowls in the fridge. The pudding will be ready to eat in about 30 minutes.