

8 Foods That Disrupt Sleep

Sleep better and feel more energized during the day by avoiding these sleep-sabotaging foods.

By Ashley Neglia



What Not to Eat

An estimated 50 to 70 million adults in the United States suffer from sleeplessness. If you're one of them, what you eat before bedtime could be keeping you awake at night and groggy during the day. Find out which **foods you should avoid at least three hours before getting in bed**, so you can get all the Zzz's you need to feel rested and restored.



Dark Chocolate

Nibbling on a piece of dark chocolate might cure a late-night sugar craving, but that sweet satisfaction might be short-lived. Certain dark chocolates, such as Hershey's Bliss Dark Chocolate, have as much as 25 to 38 percent of the amount of caffeine found in a standard cup of coffee. That's enough to keep a few people up tossing and turning.

All chocolate – even milk chocolate – contains caffeine, but an easy rule of thumb to follow is: The darker the chocolate, the more caffeine it contains. So if you can't give up the craving, reach for chocolate with a lower percentage of cocoa.

Steak

Beyond raising cholesterol and increasing obesity risk, fatty foods that are high in protein, like steak, digest slowly and may disrupt our Circadian rhythm if eaten close to bedtime. What's more, high-fat, high-protein diets have also been linked to sleep apnea, which can leave you tired and irritable



throughout the next day.



Alcohol

The nightcap. It's supposed to help you unwind and get some rest after a long day. However, time after time, studies have shown that while alcohol can help you fall asleep faster, it negatively affects your sleep cycle by reducing the amount of SWS and REM sleep – both of which are responsible for helping to repair and restore the mind and body – you receive per night.



Spicy food

Spicy food may not give you nightmares, but it sure can disrupt a good night's sleep. Lying down after eating a heavy, spice-laden meal can result in heartburn and a restless night. Studies have found that eating spicy food prior to bedtime not only reduces the overall amount of sleep a person gets, but also raise core body temperature, which has been linked to poor sleep quality.

Decaf coffee

If you're jonesing for an after-dinner cup of coffee, reaching for decaf instead of regular may not prevent the late-night jitters. Contrary to popular belief,



decaffeinated coffee contains enough caffeine to disrupt sleep, particularly for those who are caffeine sensitive.



Broccoli or cauliflower

Being healthy by eating your veggies has a time and place, but it's not before bed. Some roughage like broccoli and cauliflower contain tryptophan, which actually helps the body produce serotonin and regulates sleep. However, eaten too close to bedtime, vegetables with high amounts of slow-to-digest fiber can keep your body working well into the night while you're trying to get some shuteye.



French fries

Some of us may dream about fried food, but high-fat foods like French fries can keep you from doing just that. Indulging in one or two fries before bed may not be enough to keep you awake, but eating an entire serving may push your digestive system into overdrive not to mention give you a bad case of heartburn -- both of which are enough to prevent a good night of dreaming.

Chili

Hot sauce. Beans. Beef. Oh, my! Chili is a five-alarm recipe for sleep disaster if you eat it close to bedtime. Hot sauce-induced heartburn and a disgruntled



tummy thanks to the beans and beef will keep you from getting all of those precious 40 winks.



Want to Sleep Better?

Everyone needs sleep to function, but a growing body of evidence suggests that sleep is essential to our overall health. For a better night's sleep, try the following tips from sleep expert, Laurence Epstein, M.D.:

- Alert your body that it's time to sleep by making a soothing bedtime routine involving a bath or shower, dim lights, and reading in bed.
- Avoid snacking within two hours of your planned bedtime.
- Do not take "screen" devices into the bedroom.

For the full list of tips, check out [5 Secrets to Truly Restful Sleep \(http://www.grandparents.com/health-and-wellbeing/health/how-to-sleep-better\)](http://www.grandparents.com/health-and-wellbeing/health/how-to-sleep-better).

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