

# Recipe for Sleep: How does sleep and nutrition interact together?

Most of us can agree that getting enough sleep serves an important role in learning, memory, and mood, but what about the role it serves in our nutrition and weight?

An estimated 18 million Americans suffer from sleep apnea, a breathing disorder that causes people to stop breathing for periods of time during sleep and decreases our sleep quality. Sleep apnea is linked to people who are carrying extra pounds. This could be because those pounds cause our lungs to work harder. Energy levels in people who do not get the necessary eight hours can lead to behavior changes. These changes decrease motivation for diet and exercise and make it difficult to commit to a diet or exercise routine, which could help both their weight and sleep quality. Sleep deprivation also decreases a hormone called leptin, which drives our appetite up, making it hard for you to maintain your weight.

Additionally, getting less than eight hours a day can make it harder for you to lose weight even if you are still able to eat well and exercise. When healthy adults get as little as four hours of sleep, their glucose and insulin levels begin to look closer to those of people who have diabetes. Scary!

How can we use nutrition and exercise to improve our sleep? Exercising no less than three hours before bed can improve sleep quality. As far as nutrition, eating large meals less than four hours before bed can negatively impact sleep, especially if they're high in carbohydrates. So sticking to balanced, medium sized meals throughout the day is best. Avoiding caffeine containing coffee, tea, and soda will also help you catch Z's at night. Alcohol may help you fall asleep, but it will lessen the quality and make you feel drowsy the next day. Aim for eight cups of water or more a day and steer clear of the energy drinks, alcohol, and coffee.

## **Tips for Sleep Hygiene from the American Sleep Association:**

- Maintain a regular sleep routine
  - Go to bed at the same time. Wake up at the same time. Ideally, your schedule will remain the same (+/- 20 minutes) every night of the week.
- Avoid naps if possible
- Don't stay in bed awake for more than 5-10 minutes.
  - If you find your mind racing, or worrying about not being able to sleep during the middle of the night, get out of bed, and sit in a chair in the dark.
  - Don't watch TV or read in bed.
  - Avoid Caffeine

- Exercise before 2 pm everyday
- Have a comfortable routine before bed
  - Dark lighting, baths, no electronics, comfortable temperature, meditation, comfortable bed that is only used for sleep
- Avoid inappropriate substances that interfere with sleep
  - Cigarettes, alcohol, and certain medications

## **Sleepy Chamomile Spiced Tea**

Did you know that chamomile tea has been used to help people sleep since ancient time? Chamomile has been shown to reduce anxiety and help people fall into a deeper sleep.

Ingredients:

- 1 chamomile tea bag
- ½ cup drinking water
- ½ cup milk
- ¼ 1tsp. ground turmeric
- 1/8 tsp. ground ginger
- 1/8 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1 tbsp. honey
- pinch of black pepper

1. Let chamomile tea bag steep in hot water for 3-5 minutes
2. Stir in milk, honey, black pepper, cinnamon, ginger, and turmeric.
3. Add more to taste as needed.
4. Enjoy!