



Dietitian's Dish



Sleep Hygiene

We sleep for a third of our lives, but how often do we feel well-rested? The average adult requires 8 hours of sleep per night and two-thirds of adults' worldwide report getting less than this. So, what happens if we aren't sleeping enough?

Not getting enough quality sleep has been associated with increased risk of cancer, diminished immune response, inflammation, Alzheimer's disease, poor memory, mental health and more. It can also lead to



increased snacking and weight gain. But other than going to bed on time, there are a few things we can do at home to improve the quality of our rest each day.

Sleep is dictated by our body's circadian rhythm—our biological clock, and the melatonin we produce before bedtime. High-quality sleep involves a few things: the time it takes to get to sleep, number of awakenings after going to sleep, sleep efficiency (total time spent asleep compared to the time in bed), and duration. These can all be measured clinically with a sleep study or various wearables, but chances are you're aware if you have a difficulty with any one of these.

To ensure our biological clock is set for success, be consistent with sleep and mealtimes, get more sunlight and exercise during the day, and allow for enough time in the evenings to wind down and allow melatonin to ease us into sleep.



Seven Tips to Promote More Restful Sleep

- Eat at the same times every day. Be consistent!
- Get some sunlight with your breakfast in the morning.
- Take a morning stroll after eating. Aim for 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week.
- Include more sources of protein in your diet.
- Consider drinking warm herbal tea in the evening—chamomile can be a calming addition to help wind down.
- Limit late-night meals and snacks.
- Reduce screen time and bright lights (use night-time mode on your device) to set your brain up for a successful night's sleep.



Sleep Hygiene Nutrition

What we eat also has an impact on our sleep. Changing up our diets can improve several components for better quality sleep.

- Eating breakfast can provide us with energy for an active day and set our circadian rhythm.
- Consuming a high-protein diet, which contains the amino acid tryptophan. This includes most proteins (turkey, chicken, fish, egg whites, soybeans), milk and cheese, and seeds (sesame, pumpkin, and sunflower).
- Including foods containing high levels of natural melatonin—cherries and tart cherry juice—can help.
- Eating more zinc-rich foods (meat, shellfish, legumes, seeds, nuts).
- Limiting caffeine, alcohol, fatty-foods, and spicy food within 3-4 hours of bedtime.

Small consistent changes in daily habits can lead to a more well-rested mind and healthy body, some of the true pillars of lasting wellness.

Sources:

1. Walker, Matthew. *Why We Sleep: Unlocking the Power of Sleep and Dreams*. Scribner, 2017.
2. <https://www.thensf.org/>
3. Binks, Hannah, et al. "Effects of Diet on Sleep: A Narrative Review." *Nutrients*, vol. 12, no. 4, 2020, p. 936, [Link: <https://www.mdpi.com/2072-6643/12/4/936>]
4. <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002332.htm>

