

# NIGHT NIGHT SLEEP TIGHT

## BEST & WORST FOODS BEFORE BED

**Are you having trouble falling asleep at night?**

**Do you wake up often in the night?**

**Do you wake up exhausted and wondering where the hours went?**

We all know the value of good nutrition to power us through our day, but food also has value in powering us down at night. Whether it's the choices that you are making throughout the day or your favourite bedtime snack, the nutrients you consume or don't get enough of can be affecting the quality of your sleep. Here's what to include and avoid for a better night's sleep.

### BEST: RED FRUITS & VEGETABLES

Foods rich in lycopene have been shown to improve sleep, prevent heart disease and cancer, and even have an anti-aging effect. Lycopene is a powerful antioxidant found in foods such as grapefruit, tomato, papaya, guava, and sweet red pepper.



### WORST: UNHEALTHY, FATTY FOODS

Foods high in saturated fats and sodium are linked to silent killers such as hypertension, high cholesterol, heart disease and stroke, but they can also be a silent killer of sleep. Eating fatty foods before bed can cause digestive distress such as gas and bloating, heartburn and reflux, which can be painful and keep you awake at night.

### BEST: CALCIUM & MAGNESIUM RICH FOODS

Researchers have found that calcium levels are higher during the deepest periods of sleep. Normalizing blood calcium levels was shown to improve REM deep sleep.

Insomnia can often be due to lack of magnesium. Agitated, broken sleep can be remedied with foods high in magnesium or a magnesium supplement. Include foods such as walnuts, hazelnuts, navy beans, swiss chard, cheese, yogurt, and tahini in your diet.



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### BEST: MELATONIN RICH CHERRIES

Melatonin, a sleep-inducing nutrient, is the body's internal clock that regulates sleep. Cherries are one of the only whole food sources of melatonin. Combined with the health benefits of their phytochemical content, cherries have been found to increase sleep duration and quality, and they are an anti-inflammatory. It is recommended to eat about ¼ cup of dried tart cherries or drink 1 cup of tart cherry juice about an hour before bed.



### WORST: ALCOHOL & CAFFEINE

Feel drowsy after that glass of wine and looking forward to a good night's sleep? Don't count on it. Alcohol metabolizes quickly and can cause wakeful periods in the night, increase snoring, and shorten the duration of sleep.

Caffeine is a stimulant and can block sleep inducing chemicals in the brain and increase adrenalin. It should be avoided late in the day, but depending on sensitivity to caffeine, you may need to avoid your daytime cuppa joe. A 2013 study suggests that consuming caffeine up to 6 hours before bed can reduce total sleep and affect sleep quality.

Avoiding alcohol and caffeine can help to regulate your circadian rhythm and is a great step towards a healthier lifestyle.



### BEST: HIGH TRYPTOPHAN FOODS

A study done by the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition showed regular consumption of fish, naturally rich in tryptophan, omega 3s, and vitamin D, can be a great way to boost sleep. Studies show a reduction in sleepiness and increased alertness due to improved overnight sleep quality. Tryptophan, an amino acid that helps to make melatonin, is found in fish and meats like lamb, beef, chicken and turkey. If choosing a snack before bed, a light protein like fish is ideal so that sleep is not disturbed by digestion.



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### WORST: SPICY FOODS

You might think indigestion is the reason to avoid spicy foods before bed. While it can be disruptive, not everyone will suffer discomfort. The stimulating effects of spices on body temperature, metabolism and circulation can be linked with more time spent awake at night and a more difficult time falling asleep.

## Combinations to Promote Deep Sleep

Get the most out of the best foods for sleep by combining them with a carbohydrate. High tryptophan foods help to create serotonin, but because of the way amino acids compete, it can be difficult to get enough to the brain. Carbohydrates release insulin. When you combine a tryptophan-rich food with a carbohydrate-rich food, the insulin diverts the other amino acids away from the blood-brain barrier, allowing more tryptophan to cross the finish line!

### Here are some tasty dishes to help take you to La La Land:

1. Jasmine rice with chicken or miso soup
2. Whole grain pita with hummus
3. Whole grain crackers with nut butter
4. Steel-cut oats with almond milk
5. Rice with beans or guacamole
6. Eggs with whole grain English muffin
7. Chicken salad on whole grain rice cakes

#### Sources:

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### Chicken & Jasmine Rice Soup

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 lbs boneless skinless chicken breast – cut into ½-inch pieces
- 5 14½oz-cans reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 8 cups swiss chard, kale or spinach, coarsely chopped
- 2 large carrots, finely chopped
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 medium lemon, thinly sliced
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- 4 tsp grated lemon peel
- ½ tsp pepper
- 4 cups cooked jasmine rice



#### Directions:

1. In a large skillet, heat 1 tbsp oil over medium-high heat. Add half of the chicken. Cook and stir until browned. Transfer to a 6-qt. slow cooker. Repeat with remaining oil and chicken.
2. Stir broth, vegetables, lemon slices, lemon juice, peel and pepper into chicken. Cook, covered, on low for 4-5 hours or until chicken is tender. Stir in rice and heat through.

Servings: 12 | Calories per serving: 203 | Fat: 5g | Cholesterol: 42mg  
Sodium: 612mg | Carbohydrate: 20g | Sugar: 3g | Fibre: 2g | Protein: 20g

#### Adapted from:

<https://www.tasteofhome.com/recipes/lemon-chicken-rice-soup>