



The Epi Log

Sleep Better: Foods That Are Keeping You Up at Night

by Alessandra Bulow
on 11/08/13 at 03:00 PM



If you've kicked your afternoon coffee habit and stopped looking at your blue-light emitting phone before bed but still can't sleep, it might be time to take another look at what you're eating before you go to bed.

"Sleep is part of your overall health so the same things that you do to take care of your body and health are good for your sleep," says Janet K. Kennedy (a.k.a. [NYC Sleep Doctor](#)), a clinical psychologist and sleep specialist in New York City. "If you're snacking at night, make sure it's a healthy snack that's not loaded with sugar, which can alter blood sugar. Eliminating foods one by one will give you a sense if one may be affecting your sleep."

Here, Kennedy reveals foods that may be keeping you awake at night and the surprising reason why you should choose ice cream over cookies as a nighttime snack.

Wine, Beer, and Booze A nightcap before bed may not actually be a good idea. "Alcohol is sedating but it alters the sleep cycle so you don't spend as much time in deep sleep," says Kennedy. "The process of metabolizing alcohol wakes you up so your sleep is fragmented. Wine, beer, and cocktails have the same effect on the metabolism. It varies from person to person but it's better not to go to bed feeling the effects of alcohol."

Tomatoes According to the [American College of Gastroenterology](#), at least 20 percent of the US population has symptoms of reflux, one of the main causes of sleeplessness. Tomatoes and other foods with high acid content like onions, garlic, and spicy foods are the most likely to cause reflux. "Reflux is a big issue for sleep and eating those kinds of reflux triggering foods is better in the early evening so you make sure you have enough time to digest before going to bed," says Kennedy. "If you eat them right before bed there's a good chance that you may have an acid problem as soon as you lie down."

Steak "It's a heavy, high fat protein which the body takes longer to digest than a leaner protein, vegetable or carb," says Kennedy. "You should not be going to bed on a completely full stomach. Having your body work so hard when you want to be sleeping is going to impact your sleep. When you sleep, your metabolism is supposed to slow down, so if you have a big meal, it's going to take longer for your body to decelerate."

Chocolate Sure it tastes great but chocolate has caffeine, which disrupts sleep cycles. "It takes a lot of chocolate to get a lot of caffeine so chocolate in moderation is your best before bed," says Kennedy. "People differ in their response to chocolate. If you need your chocolate fix, have it but be aware that

for some people, a whole chocolate bar is fine and for others a chocolate square is all they can handle."

Cookies, Doughnuts & High Sugar Carbs "People turn to comfort foods as a way to wind down but they're not healthy for sleep because they cause fluctuations in blood sugar and keep it from going down," says Kennedy. "It's a comforting thing to have sweets at night. A salad isn't comforting. It's fine to have a snack but rather than diving into the Oreos, have a piece of fruit and cheese or some peanut butter, which has protein and fat. Even ice cream is better than cookies because it has fat, which isn't metabolized so quickly that it spikes blood sugar and causes a crash."

What are your tips for getting a good night's sleep?

([Photo](#): Mikkel Vang)

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[jfain](#)

11:08:36 AM on
05/06/14

It doesnt really matter what I eat only how much. If I eat too much at dinner I have nightmares I wake up burning hot and cant go back to sleep for hours.

[manjodad](#)

07:33:52 AM on
03/25/14

I will make a shake with ginger, banana, pomegranate, onion, olive oil and blueberries. I take the shake and pour it all over my alarm clock so that it won't wake me in the morning and I have a nice long sleep.

[sugarpuss](#)

04:02:42 PM on
01/30/14

Shaggy, I'm lmao!

[Shaggy247365](#)

11:25:37 PM on
01/09/14

Every night for dinner, I have a T-bone steak, roasted tomatoes and Mexican chilies, buttermilk pie for dessert, a loaded baked potato, and two glasses of red wine. for an appetizer, I have homemade pepper poppers with cheese and bacon filling. I don't have a problem sleeping 4 hours every night.

[Nyahbella](#)

01:07:09 AM on
12/12/13

In respond to the first comment, they did mention garlic by the way.

For me i tend to work late a lot.. so this is a real big issue for me..I tend to snack on baby carrots,almonds,corn etc. I also got in habit of making healthy shakes. I know most people do this during the day, but it works great for me on those late nights. I put kale or spinach, apple, frozen blueberry, flax seed and walnuts i mix it with water and sometimes i'd even throw yogurt in there. It taste great! and it vanishes any cravings that i have.

[mudlover](#)

12:19:50 PM on
12/11/13

i'm really surprised you didn't mention garlic. it is a common stimulant. many people don't connect a garlic-y meal with light/disturbed sleep.

[butterfly6283](#)

09:56:22 PM on
11/10/13

A cup of no sugar added cocoa.

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