



Are You Sabotaging Your Sleep?

We all know how important getting a good night's sleep is, but sometimes it isn't so easy to do. It's possible that you may be unknowingly sabotaging your sleep with what you are eating and drinking.



Foods that hurt sleep:

For all the reasons that we drink coffee in the morning, we should do our best to limit it at night or switch to decaf. Caffeine's stimulant effects can make it hard to fall asleep. Don't stop at coffee when looking for caffeine. With the increase in "energy" products, caffeine can be found in a variety of other foods and drinks including tea, soda, bars, chocolate, gum and other candies. It is best to avoid them within a few hours of bedtime. Heartburn and other types of indigestion can also disrupt sleep and tend to get worse when we lie down. Large meals and specific triggers, like spicy or high fat foods, can increase indigestion and make it hard to sleep.



Foods that help sleep:

You've probably heard that turkey makes you sleepy, but it is really true? Sadly, no. Even though turkey contains tryptophan, which in our bodies helps with relaxation, eating it won't help us sleep. The sleepiness we sometimes feel after Thanksgiving dinner is more likely due to overeating - it takes a lot of energy to digest that big meal! What about a warm cup of milk? No real science behind this one either. What may help with sleep, however, is a relaxing bedtime routine. If enjoying a warm cup of milk or a cup of caffeine-free tea helps you to relax, then that could help with sleep, even if it is just the placebo effect.



Other tips for better sleep:

According to the National Center on Sleep Disorders Research, some of these other tips are worth trying. Stick to a sleep schedule—Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day. Avoid caffeine and nicotine. Don't exercise too late in the day. Avoid alcoholic drinks before bed. Don't take a nap after 3 p.m. Relax before bed—for example, take a hot bath. Create a good sleeping environment. Get rid of distractions such as noises, bright lights, an uncomfortable bed, or a TV or computer in the bedroom. And finally, see a doctor if you have continued trouble sleeping.