

# Foods To Sleep By...ZZZZZZZZ



**What would you give for a good night's sleep?** Calming your brain is important to a restful night's sleep. Some foods contribute to restful sleep; others may actually keep you awake. Sleep inducing foods contain tryptophan, an amino acid precursor of the **serotonin and melatonin**. These two neurotransmitters slow nerve traffic so your brain isn't so busy.

**Eating foods rich in tryptophan** will help to make you sleepy. And eating complex carbohydrates along with tryptophan rich foods, enhances the calming effect.

**Beware of foods with added sugars** at bedtime! They may set-off a roller-coaster effect, first elevating followed by a steep plummet in blood sugar. Stress hormones are then released, keeping you awake. The best bedtime snacks contain complex carbohydrates, tryptophan and calcium. Calcium helps our brain use tryptophan to manufacture melatonin. This explains why dairy products, which contain both tryptophan and calcium, are one of the top sleep-inducing foods.

**Caffeine-containing foods top the list of foods that wake you up.** As a stimulant, caffeine speeds up the action of not only the nervous system, but of other major body systems, too. Within fifteen minutes of downing a cup of coffee, the level of adrenaline in your blood rises, which triggers increases in heart and breathing rates, urinary output, and production of stomach acids. Basically, caffeine's effects are the reverse of what you want to happen as you go to sleep.

**If you seek restful sleep**, also consider how **alcohol causes sleep disturbance**. Studies show alcohol may initially help you fall asleep, but tends to cause repeated bouts of wakefulness.

**Lighter meals will help give you a restful night's sleep.** High-fat meals and large servings prolong the work of your digestive tract. The resulting production of gas and tummy rumblings may keep you awake. **Some spices** such as cayenne and chili peppers and garlic may interfere with sleep, especially if you suffer from heartburn. Sleep experts recommend eating your evening meal about four hours before bedtime to allow time for digestion.



**But don't go to bed hungry, either.** It is difficult for your brain to relax when triggered by hunger signals. For the best quality of sleep, it's smart to **eat a sensible bedtime snack** of foods to sleep by. Sweet dreams!