



QuickBites Tip

Can sleep deprivation affect our food choices and weight?

We all know that sleep is important. But, research is now showing that **sufficient sleep plays a role in weight management, insulin resistance and Diabetes.** The timing, duration and quality of our sleep affects metabolism and hormone function and therefore, can impact our overall health and susceptibility to disease.

Some researchers propose that **there is a sleep/weight connection** that can lead to a vicious cycle with one playing a role in the other. Sleep deprivation can cause weight gain, and then the weight gain can aggravate medical conditions such as gastroesophageal reflux, osteoarthritis, and sleep apnea, which in turn interfere with sleep patterns and cause additional sleep deprivation and then additional weight gain.

There is increasing evidence that **sleep may have an effect on food choices.** Studies have demonstrated that those who sleep less are more likely to eat more calories by choosing calorie rich foods high in fat and refined carbohydrates. They also tend to eat fewer vegetables and have more irregular meal patterns.

Researchers are also looking at the opposite question – **can the foods we eat affect our sleep?** Overall, the research is limited and ongoing in this area, so only general conclusions can be made at this time. In general, the foods that affect the availability of tryptophan (an amino acid found in turkey and other protein foods) are at the center of the research. Tryptophan is the necessary ingredient for the body to produce serotonin and melatonin – the neurotransmitters known for inducing feelings of calmness and drowsiness. B vitamins and magnesium also seem to play a role in this process. Obtaining the optimal amount of tryptophan in the diet requires a combination of protein foods with carbohydrate foods.

What is the bottom line?

If you have difficulty sleeping, talk with your Doctor about addressing these issues because sleep deprivation can negatively affect your health in many different ways. Make a healthy diet a priority. A balanced and varied diet rich in fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low fat protein sources can improve sleep patterns.

Try taking some time to relax before bed with a warm beverage that contains some of the foods that may increase serotonin and melatonin levels.

Warm Cherry Chamomile Tea (1 serving)

½ cup Water

1 Chamomile Tea Bag (or your favorite bedtime blend)

½ cup 1% Milk

1 tablespoon Tart Cherry Concentrate

Dash of Cinnamon and/or Nutmeg to taste

1 tablespoon of Honey

Prepare a strong tea by pouring ½ cup boiling water over chamomile tea bag. Steep for 2-5 minutes. Place the tea in the refrigerator until chilled. Add the milk and tart cherry concentrate to the tea. Warm the mixture slightly, but not too much to cause the milk to curdle. Add the honey and spices and stir. Relax & Enjoy! (155 calories per serving)

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