

Snooze You Can Use

Sleep is essential to a healthy lifestyle. Adults who do not receive the National Sleep Foundation's (NSF) recommended seven to nine hours of sleep make themselves susceptible to many negative health impacts. These include increased risk of heart disease and type II diabetes, weight gain, depressed mood and even fatigue.

If you're struggling to fall asleep at night, try changing your before-bed diet. Items that release tryptophan into your body (like turkey, causing the infamous Thanksgiving nap) help to aid your sleep, and eating foods with carbohydrates allows the tryptophan to become more accessible to the brain. Also, contrary to common belief, alcohol is a poor sleeping aid. While it does make you drowsy, it can also interrupt the sleep pattern throughout the night.

But just as what you eat before bed affects your sleep, your sleep patterns affect your eating habits. Studies have shown that those who are sleep deprived are not only more likely to more fat-rich foods, but also consume more simple carbohydrates and fewer vegetables. This is possibly because sleep loss alters chemical signals connected to metabolism and hunger. In fact, some researchers believe sleep deprivation to be a factor in the rising rates of obesity.

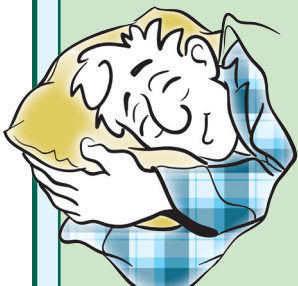
Nonetheless, sleep deprivation should not be left untreated. If you are struggling in the area of sleep, MedBen WellLiving suggests seeing your family physician as soon as possible.



Go to Sleep... Go to Sleep...

All five senses play a role in helping us fall asleep. Here's some tips to make it easier.

- **Taste** – The best bedtime snack is one that contains both a carbohydrate and protein, such as cereal with milk or cheese and crackers.
- **Smell** – Lavender lowers the heart rate and blood pressure, relaxing you.
- **Hear** – While sleeping, your brain continues to process sounds on a basic level. This can make you wake so briefly, you may not remember waking the next morning. Try to sleep in a constantly quite place.
- **Sight** – Avoid electronics at night. The light projected by them (even your cell phone) delays the release of melatonin, keeping you feeling energized longer.
- **Touch** – A room around 65 degrees is best for sleeping.



SOURCES: National Sleep Foundation