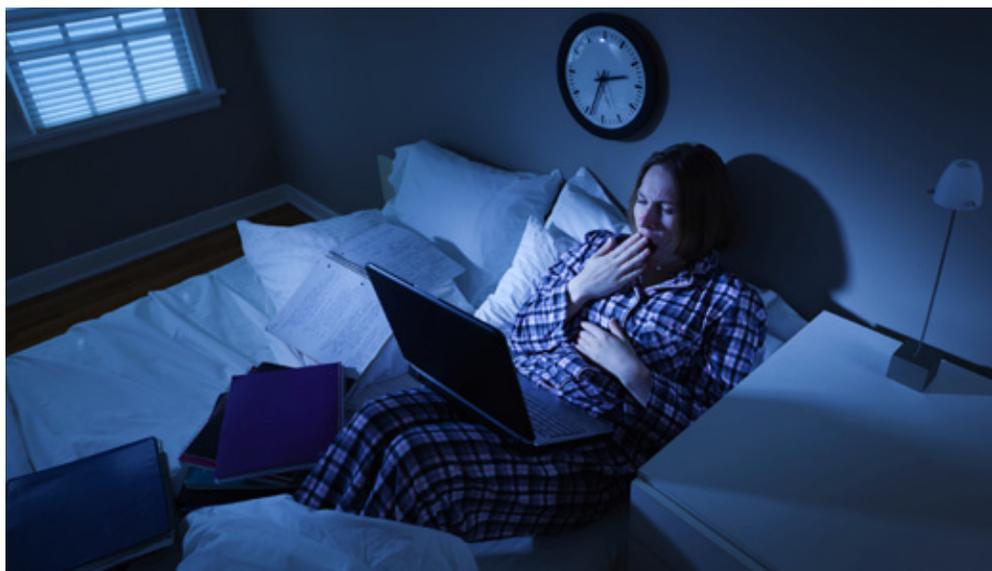


FACT SHEET: SLEEP HABITS TO AVOID

KEY FACTS

- Don't eat a large meal before bed, make it a small snack. Stay away from spicy food.
- Don't consider alcohol as a sedative to help you sleep.
- Don't smoke.
- Keep stimulating electronics turned off or out of the bedroom. No TVs, cellphones or computers.



Q: IS IT OK TO EAT JUST PRIOR TO BEDTIME?

A: It depends on what you eat. There is a long-standing belief that eating at bedtime causes weight gain. Although metabolism slows down when you sleep, it does not stop. The American Dietetic Association published a statement saying “what you eat, not when, makes the difference. Calories have the same effect on the body no matter when they are consumed.” Certain foods should be avoided at bedtime because they can contribute to sleep disturbance. These include salty foods, (when eaten close to bedtime increase the chance of waking in the middle of the night with dehydration); spicy foods (increase the likelihood of waking up during the night due to upset stomach, acid indigestion and heartburn which can also make it uncomfortable to lie down); and high fat foods (which cause disruption of the sleep cycle).

Foods containing Tryptophan may help promote sleep. These include dairy, nuts, seeds, bananas, honey, and eggs. A little food in your stomach may help you sleep, but don't overdo it.

Q: IS IT TRUE THAT ALCOHOL CAN HELP YOU FALL ASLEEP BUT CAN ALSO DISRUPT YOUR SLEEP?

A: Alcohol may help you fall asleep faster, but it often causes frequent awakenings during the night which leads to restless sleep, headaches, night sweats and nightmares. Alcohol should be consumed 4-6 hours before bedtime which allows adequate time for it to metabolize.

FACT SHEET: SLEEP HABITS TO AVOID

Q: I SMOKE A CIGARETTE JUST PRIOR TO BEDTIME, CAN THIS DISRUPT MY SLEEP?

A: Smoking can be relaxing for regular smokers, but can have the opposite effect for casual or social smokers. Nicotine is a stimulant and has similar effects as caffeine, therefore smoking should be avoided at bedtime and during the middle of the night.

Q: I WATCH TELEVISION OR WATCH A MOVIE ON MY IPAD AT BEDTIME TO HELP ME FALL ASLEEP. IS THIS A GOOD THING TO DO?

A: Unfortunately, watching television or exposure to bright light promotes sleep disturbance. Artificial light from a television screen, computer, iPad, etc., suppresses the release of the sleep-promoting hormone melatonin, making it take longer to fall asleep. If you need some noise to distract outside disturbances, a sound machine designed for sleeping or the noise from a fan is a better option.

FURTHER READING

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Unhealthy Sleep Related Behaviors
2. National Sleep Foundation: Myths and Facts about Sleep
3. WebMD: What You Eat Affects Your Sleep