

EATING BEFORE SLEEPING

A good idea or not?

 NISHA JACKSON

Eating a large dinner later than normal or having something small to snack on while watching your favorite movie may help you fall asleep. However, these habits can negatively affect your overall metabolism and diminish the quality of your precious sleep.

Many of my patients ask how to lose weight, how to fall into a deeper sleep, or for a magic bullet for better energy. The reality is, there are numerous factors involved with weight, sleep, and energy; but one thing you can count on—if you are not sleeping deeply, then you will pack on the belly fat and feel wiped out the next day.

Here are some of the factors involved with the deep sleep needed for weight loss and energy gain:

- During the dark hours of the night your body produces norepinephrine, which tells the brain to make melatonin (the chemical that dominates sleep). Pure 100-percent darkness helps produce norepinephrine, which means bright lights or light from computers, phones, and TVs can inhibit or delay this process.
- Excess cortisol at night (from high stress) can inhibit the release of norepinephrine and the production of melatonin. So when cortisol is high then melatonin is low, which equals poor sleep.
- Strong emotions, overthinking, stimulants, inflammatory foods (such as sugar, flour, unhealthy fats), and unstable blood sugar can all interrupt your sleep.
- Poor sleep will inhibit the immune response, increasing your risk for physical and mental health issues.

- Eating late at night will initially raise your blood sugar to help you get you to sleep, but you will most likely experience a crash in glucose in the middle of the night, causing interrupted sleep.
- Eating or drinking late at night slows down metabolism, since your body goes into “work mode” to digest instead of “resting and repair mode.” This puts the on the brakes for making important hormones like Human Growth Hormone and Leptin for weight control.

Research continues to churn out studies relating to sleep and our overall health. Lack of deep, restorative sleep can cause many health problems and is now tied to obesity, ADD, anxiety, cancer, autoimmune disorders, memory loss, and chronic body pain. When we eat or drink late at night, especially alcohol or starchy-sugary foods, the pancreas releases insulin. The more insulin we make the harder the glucose crash, waking us up and causing the storage of excessive body fat. This cycle also leaves us feeling exhausted. The blood glucose yo-yo effect in the body will pull on the adrenal glands for cortisol and eventually exhaust parts of the endocrine system. Our endocrine system is in charge of making hormones to keep us young and vibrant. We end up in a depressing, vicious cycle concerning food, sleep, weight, and energy. The goal is to eat less and eat the right foods, but not too late at night. This will help you sleep better and control your weight, and you will feel livelier during the day.

Here are some suggestions for deeper sleep, enhanced daytime energy, and less body fat.

- Eat a smaller dinner (shoot for fewer than 500 calories) early in the evening.




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Strong emotions, overthinking, stimulants, inflammatory foods (such as sugar, flour, unhealthy fats), and unstable blood sugar can all interrupt your sleep.

- Try to not eat two hours before bedtime. Going to bed earlier also helps.
- If you suffer from blood sugar dysregulation, opt for a high fiber/protein snack one hour before bed, but avoid alcohol, sugar and starch.
- Consider the optimal sleep environment—cool, pitch dark, and silent.
- Consider magnesium, which promotes relaxation, reduces anxiety, and helps to restore the body’s natural rhythms (the internal clock). BalanceDocs ReBalance Stress PM blunts cortisol at night, keeping you asleep longer.
- Reduce nighttime stress, especially emotional stress. Turn off your computer and phone and stop checking emails at night.
- The number of hours that your body fasts (no calories) at night has now been associated with an improved immune system, better quality of sleep, less body fat, and optimized energy. Try for a 12- to 14-hour fast period.
- Let your body get used to not eating late at night. Move your larger meal to an earlier hour, or have a snack at 3 p.m. and eat dinner by 6 p.m.

Sleep deep! You’ll live longer and feel great. 🐻



Nisha Jackson is a nationally recognized hormone expert and women’s health advocate. She has had medical clinics focusing on balance in the Rogue Valley and elsewhere for over 25 years. Her private practice, Peak Medical Clinic (peakmedicalclinic.com) has locations throughout Oregon, specializing in age management, functional medicine, and hormone balance for men and women. Nisha lectures and trains medical professionals in the area of optimal hormone balance. She is also a radio personality, motivational

speaker, columnist, and author of three books on optimal hormone balance. Nisha owns Balance Docs Inc., a supplement company that has supplements aimed at achieving optimal whole body balance.

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