News just in! Chocolate could be the key to a good nightâ€™s sleep

Description

Chocolate is undoubtedly one of the nationâ€™s favourite indulgences and new research suggests a late night square or two might help us get a good nightâ€™s rest.

Late night snacking



A study conducted by Time4Sleep found that chocolate topped the list as the nationâ€™s most **popular evening snack** to enjoy before bed.

Chocolate topped the chart above popular **savoury snacks** such as crisps and cheese.

According to the poll, the UKâ€™s **top five bed-time guilty pleasures** consumed before sleep were:

- Chocolate (38%)
- Crisps (34%)
- Cheese (30%)
- Sweets (28%)

- Bread (26%)

The benefits of eating chocolate before bed



The bed and sleep specialist teamed up with dietitian and lecturer Sophie Medlin of Kingâ€™s College London to examine which foods are best for **promoting sleep**, and which are best to avoid in the evening.

Chocolate was found to be one of the best foods to help you nod off at night, thanks to its **tryptophan** (an amino acid) content.

â€œTryptophan is the biggest influence on **melatonin levels**, an important hormone which controls our sleep patterns,â€• says Medlin.

â€œMelatonin is **produced in the brain** and the amount of it we produce, and how effectively our brain uses it, is affected by our diet.

â€œChocolate is a particularly **good source of tryptophan**, so a **hot chocolate** or a little bit of chocolate before bed is actually really good for sleep, so long as you donâ€™t overindulge.â€•

Along with tryptophan, foods with **high levels of B vitamins**, calcium and magnesium are also said to be effective in **promoting sleep** thanks to their role in releasing melatonin in the brain.

Foods rich in these nutrients include:

- Meat
- Fish
- Nuts and seeds
- Dark green leafy vegetables, such as spinach, kale and broccoli

- Soya beans
- Dairy products, such as cheese, milk and yogurt
- Pulses, such as beans, lentils and peas

Foods to avoid for a good sleep



If you struggle with restless nights and find a **hot cup of cocoa** doesnâ€™t do the trick, Medlin recommends following these simple food-related tips:

Avoid spicy, junk and processed food

These foods should always be avoided late in the evening, especially if itâ€™s something heavy and difficult to digest, as it means **your body must stay active** while it processes the food.

Timing is key

Many people may struggle with **acid reflux** if they lay down to sleep with a full stomach.

If you notice that you tend to cough or clear your throat a lot in the morning, it may well be that you are **refluxing acid** into your mouth while you are sleeping.

Try to **finish eating at least an hour before bed** to let your stomach empty.

Look out for hidden caffeine

Most people know how to avoid coffee at night due to the **caffeine**, but you might not be aware of caffeine being **hidden in other substances** such as green tea and fizzy drinks, so itâ€™s a good idea to stay away from these too.

Donâ€™t go hungry

Being hungry affects sleep as our bodies instinctively try to keep us awake to find food.

Following overly restricted diets that put us at **risk of nutrient deficiencies** can really affect our sleep.

If you find yourself feeling **hungry before bed**, a glass of milk, a small banana or a few nuts around an hour before bed could help to **improve your sleep** and your willpower the next day.

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