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How eating habits help you sleep

What we eat and drink in the evening can affect how well we sleep. Therefore, it can be beneficial to think about what you eat and when you eat it.

Don't eat too late, and choose a light meal

Eating a very heavy meal or food high in fat or sugar shortly before going to bed affects your digestion and blood sugar level – it can make it harder to fall asleep and can disrupt your deep sleep. Therefore, it's advisable to schedule your last big meal around two to three hours before going to bed and avoid sweet food late in the evening.

A key nutrient: tryptophan

Among other things, your body needs the amino acid tryptophan to produce the sleep hormone melatonin. Carbohydrates support this process. Good sources of tryptophan include dairy and soy products, oats, nuts, eggs, poultry and pulses. Cleverly combining these foods can be beneficial and help you to sleep better. Give it a go – why not try plain yoghurt with oats; nuts and a little honey; wholemeal bread with egg or cottage cheese; a banana with a soy drink. You could also eat cashew nuts or pumpkin seeds as a snack.

It's advisable to avoid caffeine and alcohol

Coffee, black and green tea and energy drinks contain caffeine. Caffeine has a stimulating effect, which makes it harder to fall asleep. Therefore, it's advisable to limit your caffeine intake starting from the afternoon or up to five hours before going to bed. Similarly, alcohol is not a good option for helping you sleep. While it can make you tired, it can also reduce the quality of your sleep. A good alternative as an evening ritual is to drink tea with extracts of lemon balm, valerian or passion flower.