



The Be Fit Minute

By Emily Gelsomin, RD, LDN



IS LACK OF SLEEP DOOMING YOUR DIET?

Do you find it's especially difficult resisting chocolate chip cookies after a few sleepless nights? It's not all in your head. In fact, a lack of sleep may be more serious than you think. Learn how skimping on shut-eye can make it harder to be healthy and lose weight.

How Hormones are Affected by Sleep

Leptin: Leptin is a hormone that signals your brain when you've had enough to eat. When you don't get substantial sleep, the level of leptin in your body decreases. Low levels of leptin may decrease how full you feel after meals.

Ghrelin: Ghrelin is a hormone that is involved in stimulating appetite. A lack of adequate sleep makes ghrelin levels rise, which increases your appetite and may cause your calorie intake to increase throughout the day.

Higher levels of ghrelin may also cause your body to store fat more easily.

Did you know?

Compared to 100 years ago, we get less sleep per night. (We now average less than 7 hours per night.)

Unfortunately, sleeping less than 8 hours has been shown to lower levels of leptin, increase levels of ghrelin, and increase body fat.

Side Effects of Not Getting Enough Sleep:

- May increase your risk of developing diabetes, heart disease, and obesity
- May promote fat storage
- May decrease muscle mass (being up for a long period of time may trigger the use of muscle as fuel for the additional hours your body is awake)
- May decrease your body's sensitivity to insulin (important for clearing sugar from your blood)
- May increase your cravings (up to 45% in one study) for high carbohydrate and high calorie foods (think: pastries, fried food, pizza, and chocolate)

How much is enough? Most adults need 7-9 hours of shut eye per night (teens and children need even more).

Consistently getting fewer than 6 hours of sleep per night may put you at risk for the above health-related complications.

Tips to Improve the Quality of Your Sleep:

→ Avoid eating at least 2 hours before bed

This will help you feel more comfortable in bed and will reduce symptoms of heartburn.

→ Get up and go to bed around the same time each day

→ Limit or avoid doing activities other than sleeping in bed, e.g. surfing the web, eating, etc.

→ Don't exercise right before bed

This revs up your body and can make it harder to fall asleep. In contrast, regular exercise done earlier in the day can improve your sleep quality.

→ Avoid caffeine or consume it earlier in the day

It takes 6-10 hours to eliminate caffeine from the body and some drugs, such as antibiotics like Cipro and Noroxin, interfere with your body's ability to break down caffeine. Echinacea can also increase the side effects of caffeine.

Caffeine is found in more than just coffee and tea

Taking 2 pills of Excedrin, Midol or Tylenol Ultra Relief Migraine Pain is equal to drinking a small (12 oz) cup of coffee. Eating 1 cup coffee ice cream or 5 miniature chocolate bars (1.5 oz) is like having a cup of tea in relation to caffeine content.

→ Limit alcohol consumption

Alcohol can disrupt your sleep during the night, ultimately reducing your sleep quality.

