

Milk, carbohydrates or a late-night pudding: what's the secret to eating for a good night's sleep?

Level 1: Elementary

1 Warmer

a. Discuss the following questions in pairs.

- How much sleep do you usually get per night?
- When do you eat your main meal of the day? Do you eat it in the evening or at lunchtime?
- Do you ever have problems sleeping? What do you do to help you fall asleep?

2 Key words

a. Find these words and phrases in the article and write the correct words next to the definitions.

digest

affect

snacking

measuring

poor

separate

studies

make the difference

1. checking the size, amount or level of something _____
2. to be important in changing the result of something _____
3. researches done to learn about something _____
4. eating small amounts of food (usually between meals) _____
5. to change something or someone in some way _____
6. not good; low in quality _____
7. to understand that two things are different _____
8. to change food in your stomach to things your body needs _____

b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity.

1. You can't _____ diet and exercise from a healthy lifestyle.
2. The food at the hotel restaurant was of very _____ quality.
3. Try to stop _____ when you're watching TV.
4. Your diet can _____ to how much sleep you get.

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Level 1: Elementary

5. There are many _____ that show how the new medicine works.
6. Eating slowly helps your body _____ food better.
7. A good night's sleep can _____ how you feel.
8. We are _____ how tall we are for a school project.

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16 August, 2025

- 1 It's not easy to find advice on how to eat for a good night's sleep online. However, what you eat seems to be important, and it can make the difference between a good sleep and a bad one.
- 2 Some of the most useful information on sleep comes from studies of people who work at night. Dr Charlotte Gupta studies how different eating habits affect people's sleep. Her most important piece of advice for a good night's sleep is to eat some time before you go to bed.
- 3 "It's not a good idea to eat food at night," Gupta says. When we eat a meal before we sleep, the body has to digest it, when it should be sleeping. "So, we're more likely to wake up during the night and not get a really good sleep," she says. The ideal is to eat your last food at least two hours before going to sleep, which means no snacking.
- 4 The size of that meal can also make a difference. Ideally, we should have a bigger meal in the middle of the day and a smaller meal in the evening. But not too small. "We don't want it to be so small that you feel really hungry at night," Gupta says.
- 5 On the question of what to eat for a good night's sleep, the answer isn't clear, says nutritionist Dr Elizabeth Machan from the University of Sydney. "We haven't got the perfect answer about what the evening meal should be," she says.
- 6 One of the problems with diet and sleep is that it's not easy to separate the two. Studies connecting late meal times with poor sleep are not measuring sleep on one night, but over the past month. "I think what it's telling us is that people who don't sleep well are more likely to eat later in the evening," says Dr Jen Walsh, at the University of Western Australia.
- 7 One way of looking at it is that eating later means less sleep, but it's also possible that people who don't sleep well eat later. "It's possible that people who eat later have poor health in general," she says. Like so many other health stories, good sleep seems to be about a healthy diet and a healthy lifestyle.

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First published in *The Guardian*, 16/08/2025

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3 Comprehension check

a. Read the article and choose the correct answer (a, b or c) according to the information in the article.

1. What does Dr Charlotte Gupta study?
 - a. how people work at night
 - b. how eating habits affect people's sleep
 - c. how to find advice online
2. According to Dr Gupta, when should you eat your last meal?
 - a. at least two hours before you go to sleep
 - b. just before you go to bed
 - c. in the middle of the night
3. What does Dr Gupta say about the size of evening meals?
 - a. They should be very big.
 - b. They should be small.
 - c. They should be smaller than lunch but not too small.
4. What does Dr Elizabeth Machan say about the perfect evening meal?
 - a. Scientists know what people should eat at night.
 - b. Scientists don't have a clear answer about what people should eat.
 - c. Scientists agree that we should eat green vegetables before bed.
5. According to the article, what is good sleep connected to?
 - a. a healthy diet and lifestyle
 - b. eating small meals before bed
 - c. not eating late at night

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4 Key language

a. Find forms of these words as they appear in the article.

1. hunger _____
2. advise _____
3. possibility _____
4. ideal _____
5. nutrition _____

b. Complete the sentences with the correct form of the words from the previous activity.

1. A(n) _____ told me to have a glass of warm milk before bedtime to help me sleep.
2. Eight hours sleep is _____ for most people.
3. Is it _____ for you to go to bed early tonight so you feel good tomorrow?
4. My _____ is not to look at your phone when you're in bed.
5. Don't go to bed when you're _____ – you won't sleep well.

5 Discussion

a. Discuss these questions.

- What things do you think can affect young people's sleep? Why?
- Think about your own eating and sleeping habits. What changes could you make to help you sleep better?

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6 In your own words

- a. Imagine that you work for a health food company that wants to create a new product for students that can help them sleep better.
 - Design the perfect late-night snack using information in the article.
 - Think about the ingredients.
 - Create a product description explaining why your snack can help students sleep better.
- b. Present your snack design to the class as if you're selling the idea to company executives. Then vote on the snack you would most likely buy.