

Improve your eating habits to sleep well

Have you ever tossed and turned when trying to sleep at night? Do you have disrupted sleep? It may be because of what you're eating.

Australian studies have found that 40% of people struggle to sleep for the recommended 7-9 hours in a day; 50% have issues such as having trouble falling asleep, staying asleep for a longer period, waking up too early and not being able to get back to sleep.

We know that sleep deprivation can hamper both physical and mental wellbeing as it can result in an increased risk of heart related conditions, type 2 diabetes, obesity, depression and anxiety.

The Sleep Foundation advises that diet and nutrition can influence the quality of your sleep, and that certain foods and drinks can make it easier or harder to get the sleep that you need.

Generally a well-balanced diet that includes plenty of nutrient dense fresh food, lean meats, high-fibre, and complex carbohydrates will support good sleep.

Recognising the connection between sleep and nutrition will allow you to eat smarter, sleep better, and live a healthier life.



Tips: diet and sleep

- **Nutrients** - get plenty of key nutrients which includes calcium, magnesium, and vitamins A, C, D and E. Research shows that low levels of these nutrients are associated with sleep problems.
- **Carbohydrates** - High carbohydrate intake has been shown to increase the number of awakenings at night and reduce deep sleep.
- **Caffeine** - it stimulates the central nervous system and makes you feel more alert, awake and energised.
- **Spice** - too much spice may cause indigestion and acid reflux.
- **Sugar** - can cause you to wake up multiple times during night.
- **Fat** - When you sleep, your digestive tract slows down and takes more time to digest food. Eating a fatty meal pushes your system to work harder, thus causing heart burn and discomfort.
- **Alcohol** - It does make you feel sleepy at first but regular consumption disrupts sleep as your blood alcohol levels decline. It also reduces muscle tone, worsening sleep apnoea symptoms.



Lentil tabbouleh with haloumi

Savour this high fibre salad infused with refreshing Mediterranean flavours and freshly picked herbs.

Serve 4/Prep 10mins, cooking time 5mins

Ingredients list

- ▶ 1 bunch of parsley and some mint leaves
- ▶ 3 tomatoes, roughly chopped
- ▶ Lemon zest, 2 tbsp of lemon juice and wedges to serve
- ▶ 2 tbsp of extra virgin olive oil
- ▶ 1 tsp of ground cinnamon
- ▶ 180g haloumi
- ▶ 400g can lentils, rinsed, drained
- ▶ 8 black olives

Method

- ▶ Roughly chop the parsley and mint leaves and add it to a mixing bowl.
- ▶ Add chopped tomatoes, lemon juice, olive oil, cinnamon and cumin to the leaves and toss well.
- ▶ Season it with freshly ground black pepper.
- ▶ Now thickly slice the haloumi and fry it in a dry non-stick pan until golden.
- ▶ Take a serving plate add lentils to it. Top it with tomato and leaves mixture and place the haloumi on side.
- ▶ Scatter over some olives and lemon zest.
- ▶ Garnish with some mint leaves and lemon wedges before serving.



Add fibre to your diet for a healthier gut

One of our health and wellbeing panel providers 'Health by Design' talks about the importance of including fibre to your diet for a healthier gut.

Trillions of bacteria live inside our digestive system, and maintaining a good balance of them is critical to our sound health. Together these bacteria form the gut microbiome, which is responsible for a variety of functions in the body including regulating the immune system, protecting against harmful germs, producing neurotransmitters for good mental health and reducing chronic inflammation.

Diet has emerged as an important influence that can have a positive impact on your gut system. Dietary fibre, found in vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts and wholegrains, is of particular significance for a healthy gut. It keeps the gut bacteria alive, thus aiding smooth digestion. And, the concern is that more than 80% Australians don't consume enough fibre.

So how much fibre should you consume each day? Guidelines recommend that adults should get between 25-30g of fibre each day.

What can you include in your diet to make sure you're getting enough fibre in your diet?

- Fruits and vegetables are loaded with fibre – especially when you keep the peel on! Aim to fill half your dinner plate with vegetables and fruit.
- Choose wholegrain breads, pasta and rice over white varieties.
- Snack on nuts, seeds and berries.
- Add legumes like beans, lentils and chickpeas to your salads, pastas and curries.

Studies suggest that improvements to the gut microbiome from increased intake of daily fibre can be seen in as little as two weeks. So start making fibre your friend today!



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