



Sleep and Nutrition

How what you eat shapes your sleep, and how sleep shapes your appetite

Sleep is where your body recovers, resets its hormones and locks in the gains from training. Nutrition and sleep work both ways: what and when you eat affects how well you sleep, and how well you sleep affects your hunger and food choices the next day. Small changes make a real difference.

The two-way street

Too little sleep raises the hunger hormone ghrelin and lowers the fullness hormone leptin, so you feel hungrier and less satisfied. It also nudges you toward high-calorie, carbohydrate-heavy foods and can dent your blood sugar control. In short, under-sleeping makes eating well harder, which is why sleep is a genuine nutrition tool.

What helps you sleep

- **Caffeine:** cut it off at least 6 to 8 hours before bed. It can disrupt sleep even when taken 6 hours earlier, and it hides in tea, cola, energy drinks and chocolate too.
- **Alcohol:** it may help you drop off, but it fragments sleep later in the night and lowers its quality.
- **Late, heavy meals:** try not to eat within about 2 hours of bed. Rich, fried or very spicy meals can trigger reflux and disrupt sleep.
- **Diet quality matters:** diets high in saturated fat and added sugar are linked with less restorative sleep, while wholegrains, fruit and vegetables are linked with better sleep.
- **Keep regular meal times:** eating at consistent times helps your body clock, which helps your sleep.
- **Sleep-supportive foods:** dairy, eggs, oats and turkey (tryptophan), nuts, seeds and leafy greens (magnesium), and tart cherries or kiwi, which are linked with better sleep in some studies.

Sleep is a performance and weight-management tool. Protect 7 to 9 hours where you can. It makes every other nutrition habit easier, from appetite control to recovery and training quality.

Around training

Hard training days need enough fuel and protein to recover, or sleep can suffer. A small protein and carbohydrate snack before bed, such as Greek yoghurt, can support overnight recovery without disrupting your sleep.

When to seek help

Persistent insomnia or a suspected sleep disorder is a medical matter, not just a nutrition one. If sleep problems continue despite good habits, please speak to your GP.

Where to learn more: the NHS, the Sleep Foundation (sleepfoundation.org/nutrition), the British Nutrition Foundation, and the British Dietetic Association (BDA). For ongoing sleep problems, please see your GP.

This leaflet is general nutritional guidance for education only. It is not medical advice, diagnosis or treatment, and it does not replace advice from your GP or a registered dietitian. Always check with a qualified professional before making significant changes, particularly if you have a health condition, are pregnant, or take medication.

Ready to take the next step? Book a free call or start your food diary analysis at performancenutritionlondon.co.uk