

We have all at one point or another felt prone to midnight snacking. We can try to eat better dinners, or drink more water, or even try locking our fridges. But somehow, it always seems to come back eventually. Most unfortunately, these late night snacks are often never healthy. We all likely wish that we could make better late night snacking decisions. But as it turns out, the answer to making better decisions when it comes to late night snacks may be getting better sleep.

- **Dangers of Late Night Snacking**

Late night snacking, while enjoyable in the moment, is often a very unhealthy habit. The body's naturally rising and falling cycle of energy, called the circadian rhythm, can often mean that a snack in the afternoon is helpful to keep us engaged and productive. However, the same cannot be said about snacking late at night, especially close to sleeping. According to dietician [Melissa Rifkin](#), you should avoid eating a snack within two hours before going to bed to avoid disrupting your sleep and gaining weight. This is because your body is meant to eat and sleep at the same time. Thus, eating before sleeping disrupts your body's natural rhythm to calm down before bed.

This disruption of your body's natural energy rhythm can cause several negative health effects. First and foremost, this habit can disrupt your sleep, making it harder to get the rest your body needs at night. However, worse sleep is not the only downside as [several studies](#) have found that late night snacking results in increased blood pressure and blood sugar, changes in metabolism, and weight gain.

These effects are worsened by most people's habit of choosing unhealthy snacks for their late night munchies. [According to a study of 20,000 Americans](#), those who were not meeting sleep recommendations, a minimum of seven hours of sleep a night, often had sweets, alcoholic beverages, and non-alcoholic beverages make up two thirds of their evening caloric intake. Researchers think that this may help explain the correlation between poor sleeping habits and weight gain as the poor habits lead to worse diet decisions. Meaning, that when we don't sleep well, we are also more likely to eat poorly, especially late at night.

- **Better Sleep Leads to Better Snacking**

However, by fixing our poor sleeping habits, we can also mend our poor snacking habits. The key to fixing our poor habits is always creating healthy patterns and rhythms. This naturally starts with healthy sleep patterns. Such patterns have been associated with healthier snack choices. In the same study of 20,000 Americans mentioned [before](#), researchers also found that participants who were meeting sleep recommendations typically ate lower quantities of snacks with greater nutritional value and lower calories.

This means that by sleeping at least seven hours every night, you can increase your chances of making healthier snacking decisions. Better sleep also has a circular effect with avoiding nightly snacks. Avoiding late night snacks can help you sleep better which will help you avoid making bad snack choices. Any way you look at it, the best way to improve your lifestyle is to sleep at least seven hours a night and avoid snacking two hours before bed.

With that in mind, here are some of the best and worst snack choices if you do feel hungry after dinner:

- **Good Snack Choices**

While you should avoid large meals and snacks late at night before bed, if you are hungry before bed it's not bad to have a healthy snack so long as you make good choices. The key tip from [dietitians](#) is to avoid highly processed foods, sugary foods, alcohol, and foods which have more than 200 calories. Great foods for late night snacking that won't negatively affect your body

[include](#) fresh and tart berries like cherries, yogurt, and foods which support healthy sleep by containing magnesium and tryptophan like pumpkin seeds, nuts, and cheese. By choosing these foods, you will be able to satisfy your hunger without compromising your sleep and health.

- Snack Choices to Avoid

However, there are several foods you should be careful to avoid if your stomach starts rumbling late at night. You mainly want to avoid foods which are high in saturated fats, sodium, sugar, or are fried. Foods to avoid [include](#) ice cream, chocolate, potato chips, and fried food. Because these foods are high in fat, calories, and sugar, they can disrupt your body's ability to go to sleep and stay asleep.

Ultimately, avoiding late night snacks will help you sleep better and make better decisions for snacks. However, if you're feeling very hungry late at night it's okay to snack so long as you make healthy decisions which will help you maintain a healthy lifestyle.

- Sources

[Cone Health](#)

[Well and Good](#)

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[Healthline](#)

[Science Daily](#)