

Sleep and weight management



Sleep affects everything from your **energy levels** to your **immune system** and **even your weight**. While most people focus on diet and exercise when trying to lose weight, many overlook how important sleep is. You might think that being awake longer means more time to burn calories, but your body doesn't quite work that way. Here's why **sleep matters for weight management** and how to improve it.

Why sleep matters

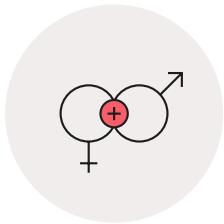
Sleep lets your body recover and recharge. Not getting enough can harm your mental and physical health. Adults need seven to nine hours of sleep each night. Less than that raises your risk of serious health issues like diabetes, heart disease, and obesity. Here are some of the **key ways that sleep affects your overall health.**

Immune system



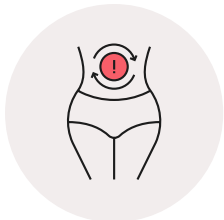
When you sleep, your body gets to work on its repair job. It produces proteins called cytokines that fight infections and calm inflammation. Without enough sleep, your defences are down, making it easier for colds, flu, or even more serious illnesses to creep in. Poor sleep can also mess with your heart health, raising the risk of long-term conditions like heart disease.

Hormonal regulation



Ever noticed how you're hungrier when you're tired? That's because lack of sleep messes with hormones like ghrelin and leptin, which control hunger and fullness. When you're tired, your body craves quick fixes like sugary or fatty snacks that aren't great for your waistline. Plus, higher levels of cortisol, the stress hormone, can lead to fat storage, especially around your belly.

Slowing metabolism



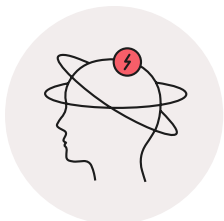
Sleep and your metabolism are closely linked. When you're short on sleep, your body doesn't process sugar as well, which can lead to weight gain over time. It also slows down how your body burns calories at rest, also called your resting metabolic rate (RMR). In simple terms, less sleep means your body holds onto fat rather than burning it.

Decision-making



Sleep also affects cognitive function and decision-making abilities. When you're tired, you're more likely to grab junk food or skip the gym. Sleep deprivation can also make you feel less in control, so sticking to healthy habits becomes harder.

Energy levels



When you're running on empty, exercise feels impossible. Lack of sleep makes you sluggish, and even if you do work out, your body doesn't recover as well. Over time, this can create a cycle where you're too tired to move, and staying inactive makes it harder to manage your weight.



How diet affects sleep

What and when you eat can have a big impact on how well you sleep. Here's what to watch for:

- **Foods to avoid:** Caffeine and heavy meals before bed are a no-go. Caffeine can stay in your system for hours, keeping you wired. Eating rich or spicy foods too close to bedtime can leave you feeling uncomfortable and struggling to drift off. Alcohol might make you feel drowsy at first, but it messes with your sleep cycle later, leaving you less refreshed.
- **Foods that help:** Certain foods can help you sleep better. Almonds and spinach are rich in magnesium, which relaxes your muscles. Tryptophan, found in turkey and dairy, helps your body produce melatonin, the sleep hormone. Whole grains, bananas, and kiwis can also be great bedtime snacks.
- **Meal timing:** Eating late at night can interfere with sleep. Aim to finish your last meal a couple of hours before bedtime. If you're hungry later, a light snack is fine but avoid anything too heavy. For older adults, drinking less in the evening can help reduce those late-night trips to the bathroom.

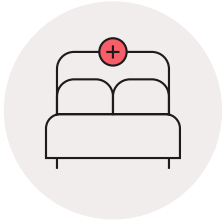
The need to urinate at night in older age can be attributed to different causes in men and women. In men, it can often be related to prostate issues, while in women, it may be due to hormonal changes associated with aging.



Tips for better sleep

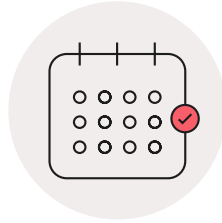
- 1. Stick to a sleep schedule:** Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even on weekends. This helps regulate your body's internal clock.
 - 2. Create a relaxing bedtime routine:** Spend 30 minutes winding down with calming activities like reading, meditating, or taking a warm bath. This signals to your body that it's time to sleep.
 - 3. Limit screen time:** Avoid phones, TVs, and laptops in the hour before bed. Blue light can interfere with melatonin, making it harder to fall asleep.
 - 4. Cut back on caffeine:** Avoid caffeine in the afternoon and evening to prevent it from disrupting your sleep.
 - 5. Exercise regularly:** Being active during the day can help you sleep better, but avoid vigorous workouts close to bedtime.
 - 6. Create a sleep-friendly environment:** Keep your bedroom cool, dark, and quiet. Use blackout curtains and eliminate any disruptive lights or noises.
 - 7. Avoid late naps:** Limit daytime naps to 20 minutes and avoid napping late in the day.
 - 8. Don't stress if you wake up:** If you can't fall back asleep, get out of bed and do something relaxing until you feel sleepy again.
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Extra sleep hacks



Upgrade your bedding:

A comfortable mattress and pillow can make a world of difference.



Track your habits:

Pay attention to what you eat or drink and how it affects your sleep.



Keep it dark:

Darkness signals your body to produce melatonin, which helps you sleep.



Sleep isn't a luxury; it's a necessity. If you want to feel your best, manage your weight, and improve your health, **prioritising good sleep is key.** Start with small changes, and you'll see big improvements over time.

Contact **HealthHero** today for more support and advice. We're with you every step of the way.