

# Can eating or drinking caffeine before bed impact your health?

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Before bed, we might think of eating a late-night snack or drinking something that may have an impact through the night. Roberta Anding, registered dietitian and assistant professor in the Baylor College of

Medicine's Joseph Barnhart Department of Orthopedic Surgery, shares why it is important to be intentional about what you eat or drink late at night, specifically with caffeine, because it can impact your health.

"From a sleep standpoint, you shouldn't eat a big meal at 8 p.m. if you plan to go to bed at 9 p.m. If you are sensitive to [caffeine](#), I would say to stop drinking it around noon," she said. "Drinking caffeine before bed will impact your sleep. The average person takes about 10 to 20 minutes to fall asleep. If you have caffeine in your system or are sensitive to it, this amount of time can double. Caffeine has a half-life of up to 4.5 hours, so a safe bet is to avoid caffeine after noon. Caffeine is not only found in coffee, tea and some [soft drinks](#), but can also be added to the pre-workout drink you take before going to the gym."

Anding explains that eating a heavy meal before bed may not always impact a person's weight gain, but it will impact blood flow and alter sleep/wake cycles.

"Having a lot of food in your stomach before bed can redirect blood flow to your gut to digest the food, meaning there is less blood flow going to your brain. You need that blood flow to your brain to make sure you go into the different sleep stages," Anding said.

Of course, eating and drinking late at night depends on a person's schedule. If a person works a [night shift](#) or is an athlete coming home late from a game, their eating and drinking schedule will differ from those who work a 9-to-5 job.

If you need to eat something before going to sleep, Anding says the best option is to eat something light and easy to digest.

"A bowl of berries, Greek yogurt or even a sliced apple with some peanut butter," she said. "It needs to be something high in protein or high

in fat that is going to stay in your stomach longer. Quality also matters. Many of the foods people eat before bedtime are traditional snack foods such as chips or ice cream."

For drinking, it's not necessary to stick with water to avoid caffeine. Anding suggests drinking milk and even sparkling water without caffeine.

"A lot of the reasons people drink coffee or tea are because they relish in the flavor," Anding said. "If [coffee](#) or tea is something a person just needs to have before bed, think about switching to a decaffeinated version, which would be a better option. Although decaffeinated isn't always 100 percent caffeine-free, there is significantly less caffeine."

Provided by Baylor College of Medicine

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