- Convenience foods

Junk food is bad for sleep

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JUNK food is known to impact cardiovascular health, diabetes and the skin, but could it also be harmful to sleep? So suggests a new study conducted by researchers in Sweden, who found that the quality of deep slow-wave sleep, considered the most restorative, could be disrupted after eating unhealthy foods.

This is not the first time that scientists have investigated how what we eat can be associated with changes in our sleep.

It has been shown, for example, that a high-sugar diet can influence sleep quality. However, little research has looked at how a particular diet directly affects rest and recuperation. And that's what researchers at Uppsala University set out to investigate.

IMPACTING SLEEP'S RESTORATIVE PROPERTIES

The researchers gave participants a healthy and then a less healthy diet in random order.

While both diets consisted of the same number of calories, one contained higher amounts of saturated fats, processed foods and sugar — in other words, junk food — while the other consisted mainly of foods considered healthy. Each diet was followed for a week, with sleep, activity and meal schedules monitored individually.

As a final step, participants were monitored in a sleep laboratory at the end of each diet, to measure their brain activity in several phases: a normal night, in a state of wakefulness, then in "catch-up" mode for lost sleep.

Published in the journal Obesity, this research revealed that junk food didn't necessarily affect sleep duration — participants slept the same number of hours regardless of diet — or the time spent in the different stages of sleep, but it did play a role in the quality of deep sleep, and consequently its restorative properties.

Research suggests that junk food may have an impact on deep slow-wave sleep, supposedly the most restorative sleep phase.