

Herbs and Supplements for Optimizing Your Sleep

Transcript

Hello and welcome. This is Dr. Ritamarie Loscalzo and I'm excited to be here to talk to you about herbs and supplements to optimize your sleep. Before we begin, I just want to make sure that you're aware that the information that I'm presenting is not intended to replace a one-on-one relationship with a qualified health care professional. It's certainly not intended as medical advice. It's intended as a sharing from my knowledge base, my clinical experience, and the information I claim from researching. It is certainly education and not medical advice.

If you're under the care of a doctor go ahead and check in with your doctor to make sure that any of the things you want to try that you check in. That it's not going to interfere with whatever other treatment you're receiving especially if you're already on medication. While it is possible to get off of medication, it's always done in conjunction with a qualified medical professional.

A little bit about these herbs. I'm not going to get into great detail about each of these herbs because I could spend a whole hour about each of these herbs. These are some of the ones that I would encourage you to go and just go check them out. Go online, type in lemon balm, learn a little about it, and see which ones resonate with you.

As I go through these I'll tell you some of them are really mild and some of them are really, really, potent. I usually like people to start with the mild ones. The mildest on here are the lemon balm and the chamomile. Lemon balm ... You can even plant a lemon balm plant. I had some. I have always had some growing in my backyard. If you have one growing in a little pot in your bedroom, all you need to do is pinch the leaves. You'll release some of the volatile oils and you smell it. It's so relaxing.

You could get lemon balm essential oil and just put a few drops on your pillow. You can have lemon balm tea or even a tincture. Some people find that keeping a few of these tinctures by their bedside and if they're having difficulty falling asleep they'll just use that.

Chamomile is another really mild one you can do as a tea. You can do it as one of those pillows. They make these flax pillows that are filled with flax seeds and sometimes other seeds and then chamomile or lavender, lemon balm. How did lavender get missed on this? Lavender's not on here. Add lavender to this when you get to this site.

You can put drops of the oil on your pillow. You can take a tea. You can take a tincture. You can get one of those eye pillows, which are awesome, that have these herbs in it. Those can help you fall asleep.

There's another really, really, mild one. Like I said, lavender's another one. You can get fresh lavender flowers, that's great. If you can put lavender oil in your bath. Put a little bit even right below your nose so you can smell it or on a little handkerchief that you can hold up to your nose. Get an essential oil diffuser. There's a lot of ways you can do this. There's more than one way to get the affects of these herbs.

As we get down the list here, the next one on the list is valerian. Valerian is one of my last ones that I tried. Valerian's a heavy hitter. Valerian can knock you out. For some people, it makes you feel groggy in the morning. It's pretty strong. By a certain percentage of the population, somewhere between ten and twenty percent of the population, valerian actually has the opposite affect and it stimulates them. They're wide awake and their eyes are open after taking valerian. I would be experimenting with some of the others before you go for the valerian.

Hops is pretty mild. Hops is pretty mild. People will say, "Well, what if I have a beer before ... " Hops is in beer. Yeah, alcohol is not so good for you. I wouldn't do it with beer. You can do hops as a tea and infusion, little tincture.

One of my favorites is passion flower. Passion flower has indicated if your brain likes to go chatter, chatter, chatter ... "Oh, I have this problem to solve tomorrow! Oh, I have that problem to solve tomorrow!" Your brain is just going, going, going, a mile a minute. I will often times take passion flower when I've had to stay up late to work on a project. When I laid down in bed my mind is still racing to try and figure out some things related to the project. If I have a difficult time getting it to shut down by doing my breathing or my vacation, then, I'll pop a little bit of passion flower. A couple of little squirts from a tincture bottle of passion flower and I can just feel my mind letting go. I drift off to sleep.

Another one that's really good for that chatter mind is something called magnolia bark. It's not as easy to find as some of the others but there's some places online where you can order it. I haven't seen it at the local health food stores like all the rest of these I've seen Herbs Farm and Aiya Herbs. Those are all sold in most health food stores. They have most of these. Magnolia is a little more difficult. You might find it online.

Then, there's kava kava. Kava kava is indicated if you tend to be an anxious person. You tend to be a worrier. Your levels of anxiety are high. Kava kava can calm that down and help you to fall asleep.

I would encourage you to study these if you have any trouble with sleep. Read through them and see which one strikes you. Sometimes just reading a description of your herb, you'll go, "Uh, that sounds like me." Or you'll hear something and say, "Nah, I don't think that's the one," because there's other traits that are associated with each one.

Supplements that you can use to promote good sleep. Magnesium is super, super, super awesome. You can take magnesium in the form of a bath like an Epsom salt bath. You can have that powdered magnesium and take a little drink before bed. There's a supplement called Natural Calm that a lot of people take. It helps to just calm everything down and help you to sleep better. You could take capsules of magnesium. You can eat foods that are high in magnesium, something green. But, that's not a good idea before bed. Probably the Epsom salts bath or the supplement with magnesium.

Vitamin B6. It's important not to just haphazardly supplement with these. B6 is important because it's a neurotransmitter catalyst. It helps you to make more serotonin. Serotonin is a precursor to melatonin.

I'll give you a little quick biochemistry lesson. There's an amino acid called tryptophan. It's an essential amino acid. It's found in almost every food that you eat. Tryptophan gets converted to 5-hydroxytryptophan also known as 5-HTP. If you've seen supplements of 5HTP on your shelf, you may now know that it's tryptophan. 5HTP then gets converted with the help of vitamin B6 into serotonin.

Serotonin helps you to feel calm and calms down your nervous system, keeps you from feeling depressed. Serotonin gets converted to melatonin. If that pathway is out of whack because you don't have enough tryptophan or because you medically don't have an open pathway there, or because you don't get enough B6, you may have difficulty sleeping because of the melatonin and serotonin interface.

B6 and magnesium are things to try. You can of course take a supplement of melatonin. In some people it causes nightmares if they took melatonin directly. Usually, when I'm working with somebody, I'll have them start with taking the precursory. Start by taking either tryptophan or 5-hydroxytryptophan with the vitamin B6 so that their body can do it naturally.

If that doesn't seem to be doing the trick, then you can take melatonin. There are lab tests that you can do to see if you're making enough melatonin. It's a saliva test and you'd probably do a blood. The one I like is the saliva test.

There is a supplement, also an amino acid supplement, called phosphatidylserine or phosphorylated serine. Phosphatidylserine helps to calm down the levels of cortisol.

If you tend to be high strung or you tend to just always be on and you seem to have a lot of stress and you're doing a lot of stressful work before going to bed, phosphatidylserine can help calm that down. You do need to be careful about taking phosphatidylserine during the day though. Don't take it during the day because it can, again, turn your cortisol down and affect your circadian rhythm. You may feel more tired or unable to focus or get food cravings as a result of the higher levels of cortisol.

About 5-HTP, we already talked about. There's something called GABA. Again, be careful with taking these. Research them, contact, work with a practitioner before you actually start doing these. Certain people tend to have low levels of GABA, which is an amino acid complex. It's gamma-aminobutyric acid. It is responsible for calming down your nervous system. People who have a lot of anxiety and they have a GABA deficiency. The same thing with Theanine.

I'm putting these out there no to say just go buy all these things and try them. Read them, study them, understand them and know that if you're having sleep difficulties there's a whole triad of things, or whole protocol of things you can try. There's also sleep combinations formulas. That might be a way to go as well. Some formulas might work better than others. There's also homeopathic formulas that can help.