The BEST Foods to Promote Sleep

Milk: It does a tired body good?

Warning: This recommendation is controversial. Let’s start with the benefits first…

Grandma was right, a glass of milk (preferably warm milk) right before bed does make you sleepy and helps you get restful recovery overnight. So this recommendation is not just some old wives tale.

Milk contains the amino acid tryptophan, just like you find in turkey (another legendary sleep promoter). Tryptophan is a building block for creating the relaxation chemical called serotonin.
And serotonin helps you get to sleep. (Just ask Uncle Bob after he consumes a tryptophan-heavy meal on Thanksgiving). So yes, milk really does work!

However, milk is a controversial recommendation for two reasons. In some folks it causes inflammation and digestive issues. Milk is not for everyone. Second, I’m wary of consuming too much of any liquid before bed, because it can get you up in the middle of the night to make a trip to the restroom.

I’ll leave it up to you as to whether or not you use it. Just be warned that if you have a small bladder – or are allergic or sensitive to dairy – that it could cause more harm to your sleep than good.

**Whole, Natural Fruit for a Whole, Natural Night's Sleep**

The next two foods perform double duty. First, they satisfy your natural sweet tooth and help you avoid overconsumption of high-fat, high-calorie desserts after dinner. Second, they both contain nutrients that help you get to sleep faster – and keep you enjoying a deeper, more restful sleep all night long.

The first fruit is cherries. Along with tomatoes, barley, oats, pineapple, and oranges, the good ol’ cherry is one of the few foods to contain melatonin. Melatonin is a chemical that controls our body’s internal clock, and you’ve probably heard how important it is for sleep. In fact, research shows that supplementing with melatonin can help you fall asleep, stay asleep, and sleep deeper. But more on that later...

For now, it’s just really important to know that a few cherries – or even a glass of tart cherry juice – can help you sleep better and longer (especially if you are an insomniac or suffering from jet lag).

Again, the problem lies in your bladder. If you are sensitive to liquid, then avoid the juice and stick to the fruit. Eat 20-30 cherries after dinner as a great way to fight off cravings and to help you fall into a deep sleep two hours later.

The second fruit that works really well for sleeping better is bananas. And since there’s no such thing (as least where I live!) as banana juice, we don’t have to worry about it getting you up in the middle of the night. ☺

Bananas don’t contain melatonin, but they are a great natural source of the minerals magnesium and potassium. These help relax the muscles and the body. If you’re a restless sleeper, many doctors believe that a lack of these two nutrients is to blame.

Make a delicious “fake banana split” of yogurt, cherries, and a banana for your dessert tonight. That could be just the ticket to dreamland… and isn’t that how the old song goes?

“Mr. Sandman, bring me a dream, with some bananas, cherries and frozen yogurt ice cream?”

Okay, now I’m getting a little silly. But these fruits also contain carbohydrates, and as you’re about to read down below, carbs make us sleepy…
50-50 Fruits

I love a post-dinner bowl of pineapple, and some nights the scent of peeling an orange is enough to make me very sleepy. Both of these fruits contain melatonin, so they are good ... in theory. However, a word of warning: Both of these fruits are also acidic, and can cause acid reflux – which might stop you from having a great night’s sleep.

Test these in small amounts. If you eat three hours before bed, you should have no problems with pineapple or oranges. But if you have them as a pre-bed snack right before you lie down, they could cause harm to your throat and your dreams. The odds of these being good or bad are 50-50. Monitor what happens after you try them.

Controversial Carbs

Carbohydrate-rich foods promote sleep because of the neurochemicals that are released when the carbohydrates enter the bloodstream after digestion. That said, I'm not giving you permission to eat a pizza or a pile of pancakes for dinner (although I know from experience that pancakes in the morning make me want to go right back to bed!).

The best source of pre-bed carbohydrates, in addition to the fruits mentioned above, would be a bowl of oatmeal with a chopped up banana. Oats are another foods source of melatonin. Plus, oatmeal is a soothing comfort food that reduces our stress and puts us in the right frame of mind to drift off to sleep.

And if dairy is OK with your system, adding a little yogurt or milk provides the triple threat for a good night's sleep.

Of course, you shouldn't go overboard on the serving size of this combo. You still need to take into account the calories from these – and every food that you eat before bed.

Quinoa is another carbohydrate that has similar sleep promoting benefits. One of my favorite meals on Meatless Monday’s is a big bowl of quinoa with vegetables and avocado. It contains a nice mixture of protein, carbs, and healthy fats to fill me up and lay me out for the night.

The Top Protein for Bedtime

The Thanksgiving Turkey Effect is a real one. It's not just a myth. Now, of course, on a day of eating turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing, and pie, turkey isn't the ONLY reason that you want to have a nap after dinner. However, it is a contributing factor to naturally drifting off to sleep.

As I mentioned earlier, turkey contains higher than average amounts of the amino acid called tryptophan. Making this your dinnertime protein on a night when you want to get a good sleep is a great tool in your dreamtime toolbox.

The Sweetest Side Dish for Sleep

What better to have with turkey than a side of slumber-inducing sweet potatoes? But please don't pour in the brown sugar, marshmallows, and scoops of sugar. Just like me, they are sweet enough on their own. ☺

The yummy orange root vegetable gives us sleep-promoting complex carbohydrates and a
hefty dose of that key nighttime relaxing nutrient, potassium. Regular potatoes are good too (but make sure to keep the skin on).

**The Ultimate Pre-Bed Sleepy Time Meal Straight From Grandma's Kitchen**

3 ounces of turkey

½ sweet potato

A side of your favorite green vegetable

Olive oil

Dessert: The Ballantyne Bedtime Banana Split

1 banana, 10 cherries, and a ½ cup of Greek Yogurt, with a spoonful of crushed walnuts

**Poppin’ Pills to Pass Out**

Yes, there are pills that will help you sleep. NO, I’m not talking about prescription pills.

You see, there’s a PROVEN supplement that can help you get to sleep AND lose weight at the same time.

This is the most cutting edge information you’ll read in this entire program.

It is the laziest, most comfortable, most restorative way to lose weight you’ll ever hear.

These are the facts. According to a research study from the Aarhus University Hospital in Denmark, post-menopausal women that consumed 3mg of melatonin per day lost body fat in an 8-week study. They aren’t sure why, but the results were significant.

**Bottom Line:** Take 3mg of melatonin each evening. Take it a few hours before bedtime to help your body as it naturally increases its production of this sleep hormone. If you don’t like pills, consider using sprayable melatonin (as it can be absorbed through the skin). Go to http://sleep.sprayable.co/

Please note: Melatonin production decreases as we age so the older you are, the BETTER this will work. And it might not work at all if you’re under 35. But if you’re over 50, like the women in this study, it should be one of the best fat burning supplements you could take … and it helps you sleep, too!

**Bedtime Tea Time**

Some folks believe it’s the ritual… others think it’s the warmth of the beverage… but most gurus believe it is due to the natural ingredients...

Whatever the reason, for centuries people have been having a nighttime tea to aid sleep. Of course, some teas, like a strong black tea or green tea, are a no-no before bed. And multiple cups of any beverage will have you running to the bathroom at night. So you have to choose the right tea and the right amount. But if you struggle to sleep, a simple tea might be your answer. At the very least, a soothing cuppa can be the nighttime ritual you need to help you relax after a long day.

The top teas for sleepy time include Chamomile, Valerian, and Lavender, but there are many commercial blends out there too, and we cover...
those below. At the very least, each of these teas contains ingredients that calm you down and prepare you to end the day.

**Chamomile**

Everyone knows about this one. Heck, almost every hotel I stay at in America (and I stay in a LOT each year) has a tea bag or two of chamomile sitting beside the coffee pods. It not only helps fight off insomnia, but alternative medicine gurus claim it helps fight anxiety as well. Wish I had known about this back in 2006 when I was fighting off those crippling anxiety attacks!

**Valerian**

Research shows that valerian root speeds the onset of sleep and improves sleep quality. A 2006 report from The American Journal of Medicine reviewed 16 different studies and concluded that valerian helps you sleep and has NO side effects. It does not contain caffeine, so it can be consumed without any worry of overstimulation. You can also find valerian in sleep-aid supplement format, if you prefer to avoid pre-bed liquids.

**Passionflower**

This one is new to me, but like chamomile, it’s an herb that has long been used for fighting both anxiety and insomnia.

**Magnolia Bark**

This is also new to me, but Magnolia bark has long been given, in Asian cultures, to people suffering from anxiety and nervousness. A 2012 study hinted that it might also help people sleep. That hint might be enough for you. Give it a try and let us know.

**Lavender**

A friend of mine, Dr. David Eifrig, recommends placing lavender oils next to your pillow to help calm you and get you off to sleep. That’s a great idea, and so is having a cup of Lavender tea as many researchers believe it helps you relax and reduce stress.

**The Best Tea Blends**

**Celestial Seasonings Sleepytime Tea**

Popular in America and Britain, this is a great place for you to start with pre-done tea blend. It’s tasty, relaxing, and the perfect part of a nighttime ritual. Some people even believe it helps with digestion (thanks to the spearmint ingredient).

**Bigelow Sweet Dreams**

You’ll also find a hint of mint in this caffeine-free combination of chamomile and other herbals. I will warn you though, some tea experts recommend peppermint as an awakening and energetic type of tea, and I actually drink it first thing in the morning. So when you try it, beware that the mint might backfire against your plans! Try it on the weekend when you have more room for error and experimentation.
**Bonus Tea Time Tip!**

Tea doesn’t just contain compounds that put you to sleep. You can also use the tea bags to fight dark circles under your eyes. All you need to do is apply soaked tea bags on your eyes to soothe away puffy, swollen, and dark circles.

You’re best off using caffeinated teas, like Green Tea, because these contain anti-inflammatory antioxidants and caffeine. The caffeine shrinks blood vessels to reduce the puff and dark color.

Here’s how to use them. Put your tea bags in hot water to make a regular Green Tea (then refrigerate the tea until morning for a nice cold glass of iced Green Tea). Squeeze out any remaining liquid from the bags and rest them in the fridge for 10 minutes. Then place them over your eyes and dark circles and relax for 10 to 20 minutes. When your time is up, remove the bags, wash up, and enjoy a fresh new face!