

Dr. Allen's Top 6 Foods that Help you Sleep

1. Cherry-Oh!

They're not just for pie filling: Cherries contain melatonin, a compound that plays a part in healthy sleep. Melatonin may help regulate sleep-wake cycles, especially for people experiencing a disruption to the body's internal clock, like night-shift workers.

Best bet: Keep cherries fresh longer by storing them in the refrigerator and washing them just before eating.

Other sources of melatonin: Oats, sweet corn, rice

2. Tuck in With Turkey

This deli counter staple contains an amino acid called tryptophan. "Tryptophan helps the body produce the mood-boosting brain chemical serotonin, which has been shown to aid in relaxation and sleep," says Marisa Moore, R.D., a spokesperson for the American Dietetic Association.

Best bet: It takes about an hour for tryptophan to act on your brain, so plan your night noshing accordingly.

Other sources of tryptophan: Chicken, tuna, soy foods, whole-grain bread

3. Soy Story

Calcium-fortified soy milk boasts two sleep-boosting nutrients: tryptophan, which increases the snooze-inducing serotonin in the brain, and calcium, which helps your body use the tryptophan to manufacture melatonin, another natural sleep aid. Try to use organic, non GMO soy products if at all possible.

Best bet: Heat it up a bit—some people find a warm drink is more relaxing than something straight from the fridge.

Other sources of calcium: Milk, cheese, yogurt

4. Tea for Tonight

A warm cup of tea before bed can soothe and relax you—but only if it's decaffeinated. Chamomile tea fits the bill. Plus, chamomile is traditionally used as a sleepy-time herb.

Best bet: Make your tea strong. Use one chamomile tea bag, but cut the water in half—drinking too much liquid before bed will have you getting up in the middle of the night to use the bathroom.

Another relaxing tea: Mint tea

5. Nut Case

Cashews are a rich source of magnesium. Research has found that people whose diets are low in magnesium may have more trouble falling asleep and staying asleep than those who get enough magnesium. According to the National Institutes of Health, substantial numbers of Americans don't get the recommended daily amount of magnesium. If you're having trouble sleeping, you may be one of them.

Best bet: Keep sodium to a minimum by choosing unsalted cashews.

Other sources of magnesium: Whole grains, milk, green leafy vegetables, other nuts

6. Beef Up

The National Institutes of health says that 12 million Americans have restless legs syndrome (RLS), a condition that can interfere with sleep by causing an irresistible urge to move the legs. RLS can be caused by a deficiency of iron or vitamin B-12, and beef is an excellent source of both.

Other sources of iron and B-12: Tuna, chicken