



Although tossing-and-turning through the night is common, it should not be taken lightly. Getting a good night sleep is important for overall **health**. It may reduce the risk of chronic diseases, keep the brain healthy, and boost the immune system. Sleep is affected by many things including underlying medical issues and mental health; nutrition also plays a roll. Here are some ways that may help improve your sleep.

Sleep Basics 101

The amount of sleep depends on a number of factors, especially age. Although sleep needs vary among individuals, the general consensus is that adults should have 7 or more hours of sleep per night. Additional **factors** that affect sleep needs:

- * **Sleep Quality**– it is just as important as the quantity of sleep. If your **sleep** is frequently interrupted, you’re not getting quality sleep.
- * **Sleep Deprivation** - sleep needs increase if you are sleep deprived.

Getting less than seven (7) hours of sleep on a regular basis has been linked to poor health, including weight gain, diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke and depression.

Need Better Sleep?

Although there is no silver bullet that will guarantee a good night’s sleep, there are some foods & beverages that may help.

- ◆ **Hot Tea**– tea made from valerian, chamomile and other non-caffeinated options. Tea is a **natural** tranquilizer and may improve the quality of sleep.
- ◆ **Nighttime Milk**– a warm glass of milk, as it contains tryptophan, an amino acid linked to better sleep. If you are lactose intolerant try lactose-free milk.
- ◆ **Poultry**– rich in tryptophan that can **induce** feelings of sleepiness.
- ◆ **Fish**– rich in vitamin B6, with salmon, tuna and halibut having the most. B6 makes melatonin, referred to as a sleep hormone.
- ◆ **Kiwi**– a recent study suggested that this fruit can impact sleep, enhancing the duration and **quality**.
- ◆ **Nuts**– walnuts, pistachios, cashews and almonds contain magnesium, zinc and melatonin, helpful to sleep.
- ◆ **Fresh Herbs**—such as basil can have a calming effect.



Still Can't Sleep?

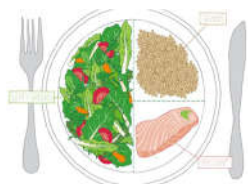
Dietary patterns and lifestyle can also impact sleep. Try making small behavior changes such as:

- ◆ Limit caffeine, especially in the afternoon or evening.
- ◆ Make dinner your lightest meal. Minimize spicy or rich foods.
- ◆ Stop eating 2-hrs prior to bedtime.
- ◆ Avoid **alcohol**, especially at night.
- ◆ If you nap, make it earlier in the day, limit to 20-30 minutes.
- ◆ Be physically **active**, however, avoid exercise 4-hours before bed.
- ◆ Limit screen time, especially in bed.
- ◆ Develop a sleep **routine** by going to bed at the same time each night.



The Bottom Line

These foods & behaviors may help sleep, however, there is no substitute for a healthy eating pattern. Focus on a **variety** of colorful vegetables & fruits, whole grains, lean protein, reduced fat dairy, and healthy fats. Choosing foods from the food groups, along with an active lifestyle are vital to overall health. Enhancing a healthy eating pattern with these sleep-inducing foods and behavior changes may reduce the restless nights and turn into “sweet dreams”!



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