

Sleepy Foods



What your child eats during the day may impact their sleep during the night. A light snack in the hour before bedtime may be helpful for some children. If your child is waking early in the morning, it may be due to hunger so a small bedtime snack can sustain them through the night.

Avoid:

- Heavy meals and spicy foods before bed, as this can make it more difficult to sleep.
- Sugar and natural sugars in the hour before bedtime. Fruit and natural fruit juice contain sugar and too much close to bedtime can provide a rush of energy.
- Caffeine from late afternoon onwards. It is not only present in tea and coffee but can also be found in hot chocolate and fizzy drinks.

Melatonin is the sleep-promoting hormone that we produce when it gets dark and this helps us to feel sleepy. Some foods contain melatonin, although research around amounts and the impact on sleep needs to be explored more.

Below is a list of foods that may aid sleep

Nuts

- **Almonds** contain magnesium which promotes both sleep and muscle relaxation. They also help to keep blood sugar levels stable overnight.
- **Pistachios** are one of the richest foods in melatonin and also provides magnesium + B6, which helps melatonin production. A small handful an hour before bed is enough.

Bananas

Bananas are an excellent source of magnesium and potassium. They also contain tryptophan - an amino acid that converts to melatonin to help us to sleep. Magnesium in bananas also calms muscles.

Blend one banana with one cup of warm milk, or an unsweetened milk alternative, to make an ideal bedtime drink.

Tart cherries

In a few studies, tart cherries have been found to naturally boost melatonin production and improve sleep duration and quality. You could try drinking a glass of tart cherry juice (available at most natural foods stores) or a serving of fresh, frozen or dried cherries before bedtime.



Pineapple or orange slices

These fruits can raise circulating melatonin levels within an hour and are also refreshing and hydrating.

Kiwis

The consumption of golden kiwis before bedtime has been linked to improved sleep quality. Studies have shown that eating two kiwis an hour before bed, can lead to faster sleep onset, longer sleep duration and better overall sleep quality. This effect is attributed to the fruit's high contents of serotonin, melatonin and antioxidants which support the body's natural sleep regulation process.

Grapes (red or purple, with skin)

Grapes naturally contain melatonin and provide an easy option if a lighter snack is preferred.



Dairy, yogurt, milk and cheese

Calcium is effective in stress reduction. It is a myth that cheese gives you nightmares!

Cereal

Not only is it a healthy snack, but it may also help you snooze. Complex carbohydrate-rich foods increase the availability of tryptophan in the bloodstream. Avoid sugar-coated cereals though - these will give your child a sugar rush and may keep them too alert for sleep.

Porridge

Porridge is an excellent supertime choice, as it is cheap, easy to prepare and has sleep inducing qualities. It is rich in calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, silicon and potassium, all of which can help to promote better sleep. You could even top it with some banana or nuts.