NUTRITION AND SLEEP

Little Game Changers for Better Sleep

IMPORTANT NUTRIENTS FOR SLEEP: CHEAT SHEET

- Melatonin: regulates circadian rhythm (your sleep cycle)
- Tryptophan: precursor to brain chemical serotonin, which promotes relaxation
- Calcium: helps the body utilize tryptophan; regulates nerve and muscle function to aid relaxation
- Vitamin B6: Helps the body produce melatonin and serotonin
- Potassium: involved in muscle and nerve function, alleviates muscle cramps and twitching
- Magnesium: regulates muscle and nerve function as well as blood pressure and blood sugar; thought to counteract stress hormone cortisol
- Omega-3 Fatty Acids: regular intake linked to improved sleep quality; studies suggest EPA and DHA help regulate serotonin to improve sleep duration; DHA is also linked to melatonin production
- Vitamin D: crucial for melatonin production ; vitamin D receptors are abundant in brain areas related to sleep
- Carbohydrates: help you fall asleep and stay asleep by enhancing tryptophan levels in the blood via an insulin release, which promotes amino acid absorption
- Protein and fat: stabilize blood sugar by buffering the breakdown of carbohydrates

Better Sleep Shopping List

HEALTHY FATS

- Nuts and seeds or nut/seed butter- healthy fat, some protein, magnesium
- Avocado- vitamin B6, potassium, healthy fat

FRUITS & VEGGIES

- Tart cherries or tart cherry juice- melatonin
- Bananas-magnesium, potassium, vitamin B6, carbohydrate
- Leafy greens- potassium, magnesium

PROTEINS

- Oily fish- tryptophan, protein, omega-3s, healthy fat, vitamin D
- Poultry- tryptophan, melatonin, magnesium, protein
- Eggs-tryptophan, protein, melatonin
- Chickpeas-tryptophan, protein, carbohydrate
- Yogurt and kefir-protein, calcium, vitamin D, melatonin

STARCHES

- Oats- tryptophan, vitamin B6, carbohydrate
- Sweet potatoes-potassium, carbohydrate

OTHER STUFF

- Honey: tryptophan, carbohydrate
- Cinnamon : blood sugar stabilization

EATING BEFORE SLEEP DO'S AND DON'TS

- DO incorporate sleep-promoting foods
- DO include a balance of protein, fat, and carbs
- DO make dinner a smaller meal compared to breakfast and lunch
- DO aim to finish eating dinner 2-3 hours before lying down
- DO limit late-night snacking. If you need a snack before bed, keep it small and choose foods that are easy to digest
- DO factor in clean-up time to optimize nighttime relaxation

- DON'T consume alcohol, caffeine, or heavy meals right before bed
- DON'T "save up" calories for the end of the day- this can lead to sleep-disrupting snacking

SLEEP-PROMOTING DINNER IDEAS

- Salmon with Olive Oil and Lemon: 1 filet baked in 1 tbsp of olive oil with lemon juice, paired with 4-6 baby potatoes and 1-2 cups of sautéed broccoli and/or cauliflower

- High-Protein Pasta: 1 cup of cooked chickpea pasta with 1/2 tbsp of olive oil, sautéed cherry tomatoes, 1 cup of cooked spinach, and 1 tbsp nutritional yeast or parmesan cheese

- Tuna Melt: Tuna salad (1 can of low-salt tuna with 1/2 tbsp of olive oil-based mayonnaise and 1 chopped celery stalk) on top of whole wheat bread and topped with a thin slice of preferred cheese. Bake at 400 degrees F for 5 minutes. Pair with a side salad (2 cups of leafy greens with cherry tomatoes, shredded carrots, and other vegetables of choice with an oil-based dressing)

- Dinner Salad: 3 cups of leafy greens topped with a handful each of cherry tomatoes, bell peppers, and black olives, with 1/2 cup of chickpeas, and 4 oz of pan-seared salmon or baked or grilled chicken or tofu. Dress the salad in oil and vinegar

- Breakfast for Dinner: 2-egg omelet with spinach, chopped tomatoes, mushrooms, and other veggies of choice with 2 tbsp of feta cheese or 1/4 cup of cottage cheese; side of whole grain toast with 1/2 an avocado

- Sheet Pan Chicken Meal: 4 oz of chicken breast or thigh marinated in olive oil, lemon, garlic, and pepper baked on a sheet pan with 1 cup of broccoli and 1 cup of cubed sweet potato- bake at 450 degrees F for 20-25 minutes.

SLEEP-PROMOTING SNACK IDEAS

- Banana and nut butter
- Plain yogurt with kiwi, banana, and/or ground flax seeds
- Rolled oats made with milk or with a spoonful of nut butter on top
- Whole grain cereal with milk
- Hummus and sliced vegetables or whole grain crackers or on a slice of whole grain toast
- Whole grain or sweet potato toast with nut butter
- Whole grain crackers topped with cottage cheese
- 1-2 hard boiled eggs
- A handful (~1/4 cup) of nuts or seeds

I HOPE YOU FOUND THIS INFORMATION HELPFUL!

You can connect with me on social media or sign up for my newsletter to get recipe ideas, healthy lifestyle tips, articles, and podcast episodes to help you live a healthier, happier life.

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The Farewell Tour: A Caregiver's Guide to Stress Management, Sane Nutrition, and Better Sleep
are available on
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