

5 Foods That Help You Sleep Better

By Mehmet C. Oz, MD, and Michael F. Roizen, MD

Here's an important strategy to live younger and longer: Get enough sleep. Insomnia -- or even just getting less than 6 hours of good sleep a night -- increases your risk of heart disease, stroke, and viral infections, but snoozing 6½ to 7½ hours can make your RealAge younger.

Did you know humans die earlier without sleep than they do without food? Fortunately, food may hold the solution to getting the ZZZs you need. A couple of hours before bedtime, curl up with one of the following sleepy-time snacks that get your brain to release sleep-friendly chemicals. ([Take this assessment to find out what's causing your sleep trouble.](#))

1. **Almonds:** A handful contains muscle-relaxing magnesium and sleep-inducing tryptophan, which increases the brain's level of feel-good serotonin.
2. **Bananas:** Beneath the peel is a trifecta of soothers: serotonin, magnesium, and melatonin, your body's natural sleep regulator. ([Here's another health benefit of sleep.](#))
3. **Skim milk:** Mom was right -- a warm glassful will help you sleep better. The milk's tryptophan has a sedating effect. Plus, it's calcium that helps your brain use that tryptophan.
4. **Oatmeal:** Oats are rich in sleep-regulating melatonin. If you drizzle just a little honey on top, it tells your brain to turn off orexin, a neuropeptide linked to alertness.
5. **Whole-wheat bread:** A slice of toast dotted with banana slices releases insulin, which helps tryptophan get to your brain. There it changes into serotonin and whispers, "Sweet dreams."

Mix and match the following for-a-good-night's-sleep foods from *EatingWell*:

- **Banana-Walnut Oatmeal.** Walnuts, like almonds, contain sleepy-time tryptophan.
- **Oatmeal & Whole-Wheat Bread.** Serve up a warm slice to help your body relax before heading to bed.
- **Bagel Gone Bananas.** This grab-and-go breakfast can double as a soothing bedtime snack.

Want more tips for better slumber? [Visit our Insomnia & Sleep Problems Center.](#)

RealAge Benefit:

Getting at least 6 hours of sleep a night -- but not more than 9 -- can make your RealAge as much as 1.5 years younger if you're a woman and 0.9 years younger if you're a man. [Take the RealAge Test!](#)

NOTE: The text in blue are links. Go to RealAge.com to get the articles if you can't click on the links.