

Sleep Matters *Optimize It!*

Nothing beats a good night's sleep. Chronic lack of sleep may lead to disease, mood disorders and accidents. In addition to strategies to improve sleep like regular exercise, exposure to daylight, following a bedtime routine and sleeping in a dark room, dietary choices play an important role in sleep.

**Aim for 7-9
hours per night**

Emerging research suggests that there is a relationship between sleep and diet quality, implying that a better diet could lead to better rest. Repeated studies have shown that a Mediterranean-style diet is associated with overall improved sleep quality. Additionally, foods with certain nutrients, like calcium, magnesium, potassium, B6, tryptophan, serotonin, melatonin and protein may improve sleep.

Mediterranean Diet Defined

A high fiber, minimally processed, plant-based diet with smaller amounts of lean meat and more servings of vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds, legumes and whole grains. Primarily uses olive oil and includes fish and other seafood.

Choose these foods to promote better sleep:

- **High Tryptophan Foods Combined with Whole Grains** – high tryptophan foods include oats, milk, canned tuna, poultry, nuts and seeds
- **Kiwi** – high in antioxidants and serotonin
- **Protein Foods** – lack of adequate protein can affect sleep quality and duration; choose lean meat, seafood, and plant-based protein (like legumes, nuts, seeds and whole grains) most often
- **Tart Cherries** – contains high levels of melatonin and antioxidants
- **Walnuts** – high in melatonin, serotonin, and polyphenols

Avoid these foods or dietary habits for better sleep:

- **Alcohol** – leads to poor quality sleep or lack of deep sleep
- **Caffeinated Beverages** – can alter sleep time, onset, and quality
- **Desserts** – high fat and sugar foods before bed can make it more difficult to fall asleep
- **Skipping Meals** – lack of food can lead to drops in blood sugar and insulin, resulting in affected sleep quality

