

True Versus Fake Sleep

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True sleep requires REM (rapid eye movement) which is congruent with dreaming. During REM sleep the brain cleanses physically, emotionally and cognitively. With this essential sleep component, one awakes with a clear mind, refreshed and ready to take on the world.

Pharmaceutical sleep aids, such as the whole class of benzodiazepines, are missing the ability to promote REM sleep and are therefore fake remedies for restful, cleansing therapeutic sleep. These medications actually result in grogginess, disorientation, and yes tiredness. Some lesser known side effects are sleep walking and even worse sleep driving. Self- medicating with alcohol is also fake sleep and results in awakening pre-maturely with an inability to return to needed sleep.

Natural or true sleep is induced by release of the hormone melatonin. This is triggered with an increase of darkness. Bright lights at night and the constant use of televisions and computers contribute to an inability to release melatonin and results in sleeplessness.

A sleep killing diet of highly processed and stimulating foods is counter- productive, triggering painful inflammation and robbing the body of nutrients. This results in conditions like restless leg syndrome which prevents restful sleep.

Over 1/3 of Americans consider chronic insomnia a problem in their lives. No wonder over 10 million rely on sedative prescriptions to help them fall asleep. These will never solve their problem of sleep deprivation.

Some people try to resolve sleep deprivation by taking supplements of melatonin. This is a start in a more natural approach to sleeping well. However, if you constantly give the body what it is supposed to make it will stop making it. A more natural solution would be to eat foods containing melatonin or its precursor tryptophan.

Tart cherries are one of the few foods to provide high levels of melatonin and can be taken before retiring. Grains have small amounts of melatonin but can keep you awake trying to digest the proteins. This digestion triggers the release of hydrochloric acid which can be problematic to your esophagus when lying down.

Your body uses tryptophan to make melatonin. So, we should eat foods high in tryptophan during the day. The foods highest in tryptophan are nuts and seeds, legumes, fruits (black currants, avocados and apricots, vegetables (endives and potatoes), spirulina and nutritional yeast.

Along with a good diet; the use of herbs can put us right to sleep, help us sleep longer, and promote REM sleep. The most effective herbal sleep aids are

1. Fresh valerian root extract
2. Chamomile flowers
3. Passion fruit leaves.

These three can be found in Dr. Christopher's Sleep well formula.
You can sleep well by eating well and relying on God's pharmacy, his herbs.

David Christopher is a Master Herbalist and the director of The School of Natural Healing. He also co-hosts the popular radio show "A Healthier You" and is a popular international teacher and lecturer.