



CHEATSHEET FOR HOLISTIC SLEEP WELLNESS

Simple, high-yield tools to wake up refreshed
and ready to take on the day



Hello!

I am so glad that you found this guide! Here you will find evidence-based, practical information on how to improve your sleep naturally, feel more refreshed, and perform at your best during the day.

Sleep is a fascinating process that is impacted by our biology, our mind, and our environment. In this guide, I have compiled high-yield, evidence-based information on a few natural supplements to improve sleep, along with some simple yet effective strategies you can use today to optimize your sleeping environment and your mindset.



Sleep Well!

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1 Body

5 Supplements to Support Sleep

A note about supplements

In this guide, I have put together a list of some of my go-to supplements to improve sleep. This is not medical advice but educational information to help you have an informed conversation with your physician. Consult with a licensed healthcare practitioner before starting any dietary supplements.

1. Magnesium
2. L-theanine
3. Lavender
4. Melatonin
5. Ashwagandha



Magnesium

What it is

Magnesium (Mg) is an essential mineral that must be obtained through diet. It is the fourth most abundant mineral in the human body after calcium, sodium, and potassium. It is important in a variety of processes, including muscle and nerve function, bone health, making protein, and DNA. About half of the magnesium in the human body is found in the bones, the rest is in soft tissue, and a tiny amount in the blood. Nearly 70% of American adults do not receive enough magnesium in diet or through supplements. Deficiencies in magnesium can contribute to poor sleep, along with anxiety, depression, and metabolic diseases.

How it works

Magnesium is involved in over 300 enzyme systems in the body. One of its effects is to maintain levels of GABA, a neurotransmitter that calms the nervous system and improves sleep. Magnesium is also involved in the production of melatonin, a hormone that regulates sleep-wake cycles. Research shows that taking magnesium helps improve sleep quality, reduces the time it takes to fall asleep, and improves daytime functioning.

How to take it

Foods rich in magnesium include spinach, legumes, nuts, seeds, and whole grains. In supplement form, magnesium citrate, glycinate, and threonate are best absorbed.

Dose

200mg to 400mg magnesium citrate, glycinate, or threonate at bedtime

Precautions

High doses may cause diarrhea, nausea, and abdominal cramping.



L-Theanine

What it is

L-theanine is an amino acid found in green, black, and oolong teas and in certain mushrooms. Whole plants usually contain compounds that balance each other out; the L-theanine in tea leaves balances the effects of caffeine. A cup of tea may contain 5–30mg of L-theanine depending on the kind of tea.

How it works

L-theanine promotes a sense of calm, reduces stress and anxiety, and improves cognition without causing sedation. Thus, it may also be taken during the day to help with relaxation and focus. It crosses the blood-brain barrier and enhances alpha brain waves, which are commonly seen during states of meditation or “wakeful relaxation.” It also increases levels of GABA, modulates serotonin and dopamine activity, and reduces levels of glutamate, an “excitatory” neurotransmitter. Research shows that L-theanine can help people fall asleep more quickly and improve sleep quality.

How to take it

Drinking tea in order to obtain L-theanine for sleep is not recommended, because of the caffeine content in tea. Purified L-theanine is available as a dietary supplement and does not contain caffeine.

Dose

200–400mg approximately 30–60 minutes before bedtime

Precautions

Generally well tolerated



Lavender

What it is

Lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*) is a plant that has been used for centuries to treat anxiety, depression, and sleep issues, among many other conditions. It may be used in aromatherapy, taken orally as a dietary supplement, applied topically, or brewed into a tea.

How it works

Lavender reduces anxiety, pain, and inflammation and helps to promote sleep. It has also been shown to have antibacterial activity and neuroprotective effects. Lavender helps to relax blood vessels, enhances GABA signaling, reduces blood pressure and heart rate, and balances the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous system. A study of an oral lavender supplement showed that it was as effective as the benzodiazepine lorazepam (Ativan) at reducing anxiety. Other studies have shown that lavender improves sleep quality, reduces sleep disturbance, and may enhance deep, slow-wave sleep.

How to take it

Use lavender oil aromatherapy in a well ventilated room. Lavender oil may also be applied topically, but be sure it is in diluted form before applying to the skin. Lavender may also be taken orally as a supplement.

Dose

The oral supplement may be taken in doses of 80mg to 160mg at bedtime.

Precautions

Oral: Mild gastrointestinal upset

Topical: Allergic skin reactions and sensitivity to sunlight

Caution: Lavender may have hormonal effects and is not advised for use with hormone-sensitive cancers. There also have been case reports of excessive breast development in preteen boys with repeated application of lavender.



Melatonin

What it is

Melatonin is a hormone naturally produced by the pineal gland, in the human brain. It regulates the biological clock and our rhythms of sleep and wakefulness. Our levels of melatonin fluctuate throughout the day. Darkness at night signals melatonin levels to increase and promote sleep, resulting in a decrease in body temperature. In the morning, melatonin levels go down and promote wakefulness. The elderly and people with depression tend to have lower levels of melatonin.

How it works

Melatonin has been shown to synchronize the sleep-wake cycle; reduce the time it takes to fall asleep; improve sleep quality; and increase total sleep time. It may also have antioxidant effects. Our natural melatonin levels start to rise approximately 2 hours before sleep onset and peak approximately 5 hours later. Because of its effects on the body clock, melatonin has been used to treat insomnia, jet lag, shift work, and circadian rhythm disorders, among several other conditions.

How to take it

Small amounts of melatonin are found in certain fruits and vegetables, in nuts, and in olive oil. It may also be taken in supplement form. Melatonin has a half-life of approximately 30–60 minutes and should be taken about 1–2 hours before bedtime.

Dose

Less is more with melatonin; lower doses are as effective as higher doses, with fewer side effects. Optimal dose range is 0.5mg to 2mg.

Precautions

Generally well tolerated, but may cause vivid dreams, GI upset, headaches, short-term depression, dizziness, and daytime drowsiness. Data on long-term use is limited, but it is safe in the short term. I usually recommend no longer than 8 weeks continuously.



Ashwagandha

What it is

Also known as Indian ginseng or *withania somnifera*, ashwagandha is an Ayurvedic herb that has been used for thousands of years. It is classified as an *adaptogen*, which is a class of herbs that regulate hormones involved in the stress response. Adaptogens have been shown to support adrenal health and improve sleep. Its scientific name *somnifera* means “sleep-inducer” in Latin.

How it works

Research has shown that its stress-relieving properties may occur via modulating the hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal axis. Ashwagandha has been shown to reduce levels of morning cortisol. Studies show that ashwagandha improves sleep quality, reduces the time it takes to fall asleep, and improves daytime fatigue.

How to take it

Ashwagandha is available in four forms: capsules, powders, tablets, and tinctures. Choose a product with extract from the root rather than leaves; most research has been conducted on root extracts, and the root contains the highest concentration of *withanolides*, the active ingredient. It should be taken for at least 8 weeks in order for it to work.

Dose

240–600mg per day

Precautions

Generally well tolerated. Should be used under supervision of a physician in patients with diabetes, thyroid disorders, and autoimmune conditions.



**2 Set the
scence**

HEALTHY BEDROOM

CHECKLIST

THE ROOM



- Should be inviting — think "spa-like" atmosphere & reduce clutter
- Room should be well ventilated
- Ideal temperature is 60-67°F / 16-18°C
- Use colors that are calming, like blues, yellows, and greens

THE BAD



- Use good quality bedding. Cotton percale sheets are most breathable and good for staying cool at night
- Choose the right pillow & mattress for your sleeping posture
- Reduce anxiety associated with the bed by using it for sleep and intimacy only

LIGHT



- Keep the lights dim & avoid blue light after 7 p.m. — think "cave-like", this promotes melatonin production
- Use blackout curtains
- Use a sunrise alarm if you have trouble getting up in the morning

NOISE



- Use white noise to block ambient sounds
- Cover windows & floors with curtains & rugs to dampen noise
- Use soft, flexible earplugs, no more than 32 decibels so you can still hear important noises like your alarm

Sleep School

The secret to optimizing sleep quality is understanding these:

1. Circadian rhythm
2. Sleep drive
3. Mindset & your relationship with sleep

How much sleep do we really need ?

Conventional understanding states that most adults need between 7–9 hours of sleep per night. However, sleep requirements vary greatly between individuals and 5 or 6 hours may be enough for some people. Furthermore, sleep requirements decrease with age. I encourage my patients to focus more on sleep quality and daytime functioning over the absolute number of hours they are sleeping.

Pro tip: Focus on sleep quality over quantity for sleep requirements.

Circadian rhythm

This is the innate biological clock that drives our body rhythms, from sleep-wake cycles to hunger, metabolism, cognitive processes, and more. In Latin, *circa* means “approximately or around” and *dia* means “day.” Circadian cycles are slightly longer than 24 hrs and are entrained to environmental cues like light. Circadian rhythm sleep disorders include delayed sleep phase syndrome (DSPS), advanced sleep phase syndrome (ASPS), shift work sleep disorder, and jet lag.

Pro tip: Keep a consistent schedule by getting out of bed and eating your meals around the same time every day, give or take one hour



3 Mind

SLEEP MINDSET WORKSHEET

What negative thoughts about sleep do I experience?

What positive thoughts will improve my relationship with sleep?

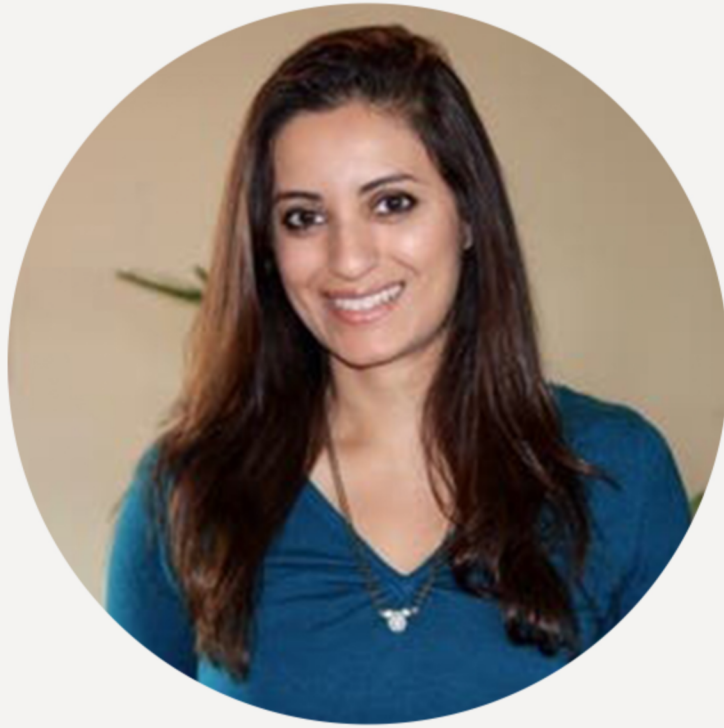
What will optimizing my sleep help me achieve?

WORRY TIME WORKSHEET

What is on my mind today?

What is the worst-case outcome?
What is the best-case outcome?
What is the most realistic outcome?

What are my action items?



Disclaimer

The information in this guide is educational information only – not medical advice. The content is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment, and does not constitute medical or other professional advice.

