

# USC Center for Work & Family Life

## Foods for Better Sleep

Tryptophan is a natural, sleep-inducing amino acid that increases levels of melatonin and serotonin to help regulate sleep cycles.

### Naturally found in:

- Cherries, cherry juice
- Bananas
- Figs

### Foods high in carbs and calcium, or medium in protein can speed up release of these in the brain.

- Dairy: milk, cheese, yogurt
- Soy: milk, tofu, soybeans
- Whole grains: breads, cereals
- Rice, oatmeal
- Seeds: sesame, sunflower, flax
- Nuts: hazelnuts, peanuts, walnuts
- Beans, lentils, chickpeas
- Protein: eggs, cold cuts, peanut butter
- Fish: salmon, halibut, tuna
- Calcium rich: kale
- Magnesium rich: almonds

### Snack Ideas:

It takes about an hour for the tryptophan to reach your brain, so plan ahead and do not eat right before sleeping!

- Cereal and milk (whole grain and low in sugars)
- Whole grain peanut butter sandwich
- Oatmeal or oatmeal cookies with milk
- Whole grain tortilla chips with hummus
- Yogurt with nut toppings

### Avoid:

**Caffeine:** coffee, chocolate, cola, tea  
Junk foods or processed carbs  
Foods high in fat, oils or spices  
Alcohol, nicotine