



This article contains general information dealing with health and wellness. It does not constitute medical advice and should not be relied on for diagnosing or treating any illness, injury or disease.

January 28, 2026

What you eat can help you sleep!

A few years ago, a former BCPVPA staff member directed me to the online NPR Life Kit series, which featured articles and podcasts on a variety of interesting topics. Many of these have inspired ReFresh articles, including today's!

[Click here for the article](#) and podcast used to prepare this week's ReFresh on how eating habits may help us get a better night's rest.

The Relationship Between Eating and Sleep

Most of us can speak to how poor sleep affects our eating habits. When we don't sleep well and feel especially tired, our food choices often change. For example, do you find yourself reaching for breads, pastas, or other food high in quick carbohydrates - and, of course, sugar?

In today's ReFresh, we will turn our attention to what we can eat that may positively affect our sleep quality.

Different nutrients play a role in how well we sleep at night. One example is an essential amino acid called **tryptophan**, which our bodies cannot self-produce on their own and must therefore be obtained through food. Once consumed, this amino acid is then converted into serotonin and melatonin in the brain. Both of these chemicals play an important role in sleep: melatonin is important for helping us fall and stay asleep, while serotonin makes us feel happy and helps regulate our sleep-wake cycle.

It is important to remember that tryptophan is not a sedative, nor fast acting. Nutrients like these take time to break down and to be used by the body. Along with other micronutrients, they support healthier sleep over time rather than producing immediate effects. Consuming them throughout the day makes these nutrients available when it is time to produce melatonin for sleep.

Foods of Interest

Eating more fruits and vegetables is one of the best ways to improve sleep health. Many fruits and veggies are good sources of multiple sleep-supporting nutrients including **serotonin, melatonin, and micronutrients that also help the body produce melatonin - like magnesium, folate, vitamin B6 and**. These foods also tend to be high in fibre content, and people who consume higher-fibre diets generally sleep more soundly.

What to Avoid

While the point of this article is to focus on foods to help you sleep, we should also flag food groups that negatively impact your sleep patterns:

- *Caffeine*, particularly later in the day as it acts as a stimulant. It is also worth noting that as we age, our bodies process and eliminate caffeine more slowly.
- *Alcohol close to bedtime*. While alcohol may initially make you feel sleepy, it disrupts sleep by making it shallow and more fragmented. If you choose to drink, do so several hours before bedtime
- *Heavy meals right before bed*. Digestion slows at night, and eating late may lead to discomfort or heartburn when lying down in bed.
- *Added sugar and refined carbohydrates* can also interfere with sleep quality.

When Travelling

A tip in the podcast for travelling across different time zones is to adapt your eating schedule to the new time zone quickly. Eat at the regular mealtimes of the location where you are staying.

Book of Recipes

The author in this story has published a book of recipes which maximizes the top 20 powerhouse ingredients that studies have demonstrated benefit sleep.

Here is a breakdown example of three of these powerhouse ingredients:

- **Bananas:** A source of fibre, complex carbohydrates, serotonin, melatonin, magnesium and vitamin B6
- **Pineapple:** Provides fibre, complex carbohydrates, serotonin, melatonin
- **Tomatoes:** Contain fibre, complex carbohydrates, melatonin, vitamin B6

Here are the remaining 17!

- Almonds, Barley, Brown Rice, Cherries, Chia seeds
- Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Ginger, Lentils, Oats
- Pumpkin seeds, Salmon, Spinach, Tofu
- Turkey, Walnuts, White Beans, Yogurt

You can start to prepare for good nights of sleep by adding some of these powerhouse ingredients to your meals!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Morandini', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rochelle Morandini

Member Health & Well-Being, Director

If you would like to contribute or have ideas about what you would like to see in the ReFresh series, we would love to hear from you: contact rochelle@bcpvpa.bc.ca.