



# DO THE LIQUIDS YOU DRINK AFFECT YOUR SLEEP?

Sleep is essential to life. It is during sleep that the mind packs away the day's activity and processes memory. Loss of sleep can negatively impact not only your energy level, but also your mood, hormone level and long-term memory storage. To prevent these side effects, it is essential that **sleep loss be taken seriously and promptly addressed**. When insomnia or wakefulness becomes a recurrent problem, examine your diet. Often the liquids in your diet are contributing to the problem, and exchanging them for beverages that are sleep aids will improve the quality and quantity of sleep you are getting.



## Caffeine

Caffeine is found in a number of popular beverages and is the most common dietary cause of insomnia. **Caffeine effects the ability to sleep by blocking sleep neurotransmitters**, signaling the body to increase adrenaline production and acting as a diuretic. It is considered safe to consume caffeine early in the day, but limit your daily intake to about 160 mg routinely, and never more than 300 mg a day. To limit your caffeine intake cut black teas, coffee and caffeinated sodas, and from your diet, especially after 7 p.m. Cut energy drinks from your diet completely.

## Alcohol

Alcohol is often touted as a sleep aid, and in fact having a single glass of wine, a night cap of spirits or a beer may work to your benefit. Alcohol is a depressant, and a single serving of alcohol will trigger the body to relax, making it easier to fall asleep. But when more than the recommended single serving is consumed, alcohol begins to limit inhibitions, which works as a stimulant. When drunk it is significantly harder to fall asleep. Also, **excessive drinking may inhibit REM sleep**, the part of the sleep cycle in which you dream, and when memory is processed. Failure to get enough REM sleep has serious psychological side effects and contributes to fatigue. Similarly, when broken down by the body, alcohol triggers minor withdrawal symptoms, including physiological arousal. The resulting physical effects, including increased heart rate, sweating and body tremors, causing you to wake often.

## Hot Drinks

Most hot beverages can help you sleep. Warm drinks encourage the body temperature to rise, which makes you both relaxed and sleepy. A number of herbal teas are both caffeine-free and sleep-encouraging. Valerian root and chamomile have both been used for centuries to treat sleeplessness. Green tea, if purchased in a decaffeinated form, contains thiamine which promotes sound sleep as well.

## Cold Drinks

Cherry juice, specifically made with tart cherries, or pie cherries is extremely effective in treating insomnia in the long term. There is a chemical in the cherry juice that encourages the body to produce melatonin. Melatonin is the chemical that naturally regulates the body's circadian rhythm, which helps to develop a regular sleep pattern over an extended period of time. Almond milk is also effective at assisting sleep. Almonds are rich in magnesium, which both encourages a regular sleep pattern and muscle relaxation. Almond milk is also rich in protein, which stabilizes the body's blood sugar and encourages deep sleep.

## Dairy

Dairy-based beverages, such as warm or cold milk, drinkable yogurt and buttermilk, all contain tryptophan. Tryptophan encourages the body's production of serotonin, the primary neurotransmitter responsible for triggering sleep. Dairy products also contain calcium. Calcium assists sleep by both reducing the body's stress response and stabilizing the nerves.