

# Managing Diet to Promote Sleep

An important hormone that regulates our sleep is melatonin. Melatonin is produced in the brain and the amount we produce is affected by our diet.

One of the biggest influences on melatonin levels is the intake of a protein called tryptophan. Secondary influencers are calcium, magnesium, and vitamin B6 which help the brain utilize tryptophan and produce melatonin.

The gold standard for a pre-bedtime beverage is still warm milk.

Several foods are good sources of tryptophan and/or melatonin, here are some examples:

**Milk**  
Milk products have high amounts of tryptophan and are also excellent sources of calcium.

**Nuts and Seeds**  
A handful of walnuts provides an excellent source of melatonin. Almonds, peanuts, sunflower seeds, and flax seed also provide reasonable levels. Nuts and seeds overall are rich in tryptophan, especially pumpkin seeds.

**Fruits**  
Certain fruits contain higher levels of melatonin which may help you fall asleep faster and wake up less often during the night.

Research shows that tart sour cherries have the highest levels of melatonin of any type of food. Other good sources are bananas, strawberries, raspberries, pomegranates, red grapes, and kiwis.

**Whole Grains**  
Excellent sources of melatonin are found in rolled oats, barley, and rice.

**Vegetables**  
There is also melatonin in corn, asparagus, tomatoes, broccoli, cucumber, and brussel sprouts.

**Protein sources**  
Tryptophan is found in turkey, chicken, shrimp, salmon, halibut, tuna, cod, and lean red meat. Legumes are also a great source, such as kidney beans, lima beans, black beans, split peas, chick peas, and tofu.

Additional high sources of melatonin include ginger root, black and green olives, and fresh mint.

Overall a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, grains, and lean protein sources will contain adequate levels of dietary melatonin and tryptophan. Vitamins and minerals from these foods will help contribute to the synthesis of melatonin.

Sleep and eat well!

# WELLNESS QUARTERLY

wellbeing news, advice, and opinions from christie gardens staff and residents

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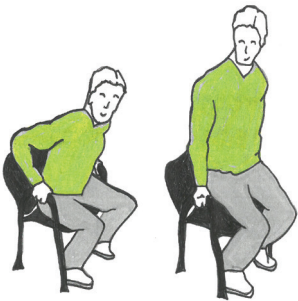
# Body Mechanics: The Triceps Dip

The triceps dip represents a movement that we have all done at some point: getting up from a chair while pushing up from the armrest to assist.

Practicing this exercise regularly really helps to strengthen the triceps, anterior deltoids, chest muscles and the rhomboid muscles of the back.

The key to properly performing this exercise is to use just the right amount of leg strength in order to fully extend the arms. It is important to concentrate on the arms to press up, while lightly assisting with the legs.

Cheers to your health!



Jeff Dubé, BSc, PTS, ATC  
Fitness Program Coordinator

- 1 start from a seated position in a chair with armrests. Hands are resting on armrests and the elbows are tucked in behind. The feet are directly under the chair.
- 2 push up with the arms and elevate yourself from the chair, help only a little with the legs.
- 3 return to your neutral position but only enough to "tap" onto the chair seat before beginning the next repetition. Repeat 10 times.



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# Sleep Your Way to Better Health

One thing all humans have in common is that we all require extended periods of sleep to successfully carry out our daily activities.

You might not be aware of it, but during sleeping hours, we are going through an important period of processing, restoration, and strengthening. However, many aspects of exactly how this occurs remain a mystery to scientists.

There is evidence to support that we require sleep to repair tissue, synthesize hormones, and consolidate memories.

Throughout the day our brains take in a lot of information. Overnight, bits and pieces of information are transferred from more tentative, short-term memory to stronger, long-term memory – a process called consolidation.

Research has shown that after we sleep, we tend to retain more information and perform better on memory tasks.

Without sufficient sleep, your body produces less of the proteins called cytokines. Cytokines are both produced and released during sleep, they target infection and inflammation and are essential for a strong immune system.

Chronic sleep loss has even been shown to increase your risk of contracting an influenza infection.

A healthy amount of sleep can also protect you from health issues such as heart disease, diabetes and obesity. Often, when we're sick, we require more sleep to recover. This is because our immune system and sleeping habits are so closely linked.

continues inside ...

# in this issue ...

Health:  
Sleep and Health

Body Mechanics:  
Triceps Dip

Diet and Health:  
Foods to Promote Sleep

Profile:  
Estrellita Gumayan





