

## 8 Perfect Sleep-Better Foods

Nothing makes it harder to fall asleep than knowing how important it is to fall asleep. So when the pressure's on, try chowing down on one of these snacks before bedtime to ensure some serious shut-eye—they're all hand-picked and approved by the Eat This, Not That nutrition team.

Content provided by:

**Men'sHealth**  
TONS OF USEFUL STUFF



**Nonfat popcorn:** Pop a bag half an hour before bedtime. The carbs will induce your body to create serotonin, a neurochemical that makes you feel relaxed. Skip the butter—fat will slow the process of boosting those feel-good chemicals, and will also slow digestion in general.



**Oatmeal with sliced banana:** Sleep is inspired by the hormone melatonin, but stress or excitement can disrupt melatonin's release. Bring your brain back down to earth by whipping up a bowl of instant oatmeal and topping it with a sliced banana, which is rich in melatonin. (Something else that helps you sleep: A good workout, early in the day. Click here for [downloadable workouts](#).)



**One cup of plain yogurt with 2 tablespoons mixed nuts:** Scientists in Slovakia gave people either 3 grams each of two amino acids (lysine and arginine) or a placebo, and asked them to deliver a speech. Blood measurements of stress hormones revealed that the amino acid-fortified speakers were half as anxious during and after the speech as those who took the placebo. Yogurt is one of the best food sources of lysine; nuts pack tons of arginine. Because both contain alertness-inducing protein, you're best off eating this combo a few hours before bed (or even at midday, before a big, stressful presentation at work). It'll reduce the residual stress you feel later in the evening, meaning you won't replay your day over and over again in your head as you try to fall asleep.



---

**A pile of sesame seeds:** Sesame seeds are one of the best natural sources of tryptophan, the sleep-inducing amino acid responsible for all of those post-Thanksgiving turkey comas. Hold off on the turkey sammies, though—the protein in the turkey might offset the tryptophan's benefit.



---

**A handful of pretzels:** Pretzels are a low-calorie, low-fat source of carbohydrates, which will make you feel sleepy, but won't pack on the pounds or give you belly-aching indigestion. Check out which pretzel made it onto our list of the [125 best supermarket foods](#).



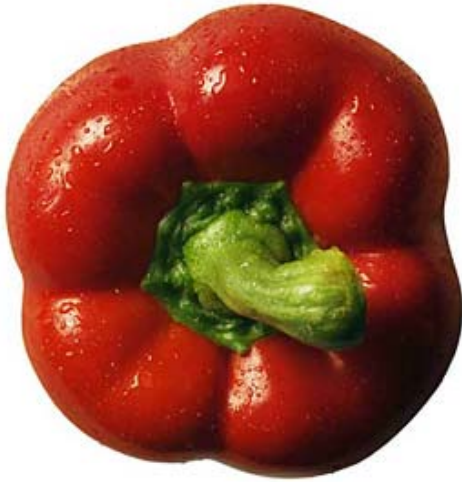
---

**One glass of wine:** It's called a "nightcap" for a reason—a glass of wine really does take the edge off. University of Toronto researchers discovered that one alcoholic drink caused people's blood vessels to relax—but two began to reverse the effects, so limit your intake. Relaxed blood vessels means lower blood pressure, slower heart rate, and greater ability to relax in general. For more great tips like these, sign up for the [Eat This, Not That Newsletter](#).



---

**A 4-oz. glass of unsweetened cherry juice:** Cherry juice has serotonin-inducing carbohydrates, which will help relax you. Down the cherry juice an hour before bedtime, in case you feel a small jolt of energy from the sugar. There's not enough to keep you up all night or destabilize your blood sugar levels. To see some major blood glucose offenders, see our slideshow of [The 30 Worst Foods in America](#).



---

**Red bell peppers:** Researchers at the University of Alabama fed rats 200 milligrams of vitamin C twice a day and found that it nearly stopped the secretion of cortisol, a hormone released in your body when you're stressed. Calorie for calorie, red bell peppers give you more vitamin C than any other fruit or vegetable.

URL: <http://health.msn.com/ssprint.aspx?cp-documentid=100242074&imageindex=1>