



HERBS TO BOOST MELATONIN, THE "BETTER SLEEP" HORMONE

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If you have problems sleeping, I am sure you have heard these two terms frequently: serotonin and melatonin. Before moving on to the herbs that boost melatonin, let's first understand the role that serotonin and melatonin play in sleep.

Serotonin and Melatonin

Serotonin simply is a neurotransmitter that the body uses to make its own melatonin. This hormone with other hormones helps decide when you sleep, how much, and the quality of sleep.

Melatonin is also a hormone that is involved in your ability to sleep. This hormone is released into the brain but not haphazardly. In a nutshell, as the day gets darker or night begins to fall, more melatonin is released to prepare one for sleep. The reverse happens as the dark gets lighter. Less melatonin is released as the sun rises and you wake up. This is also called the circadian rhythm. But there is a catch, not only does the amount of light in the day affect melatonin release but also serotonin levels. If the amount of serotonin is too high or too low, the amount of melatonin will be affected. This, in turn, affects the amount and quality of sleep.

Boy, it does seem to be a vicious cycle between having the right amount of hormones so that you can sleep. To complicate the issue, if you suffer from insomnia or jet lag then the situation becomes more complicated.

While herbs that are used to increase serotonin production are well known, the role this hormone plays in sleep is not as common. Why? Serotonin is also known to enhance mood or reduce depression while at the same time aiding in helping one sleep.

Thankfully, medicinal herbs offer a safe and effective solution for sleep problems..

St. John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*)

Now, when it comes to St. John's Wort, it tends to do double duty. It is used as a treatment for depression but it also contains melatonin. Yes, you can buy capsules that contain this herb but why would you want to when you can enjoy a delicious cup of St. John's Wort tea so easily.

To begin the process, put the teapot on to heat some water. Take your tea infuser and add 2 teaspoons of dried St. John's Wort flowers and leaves in the infuser. Put the infuser in the cup, add hot water, and allow it to steep for 10 minutes. After the steeping time has passed, remove the infuser, and sweeten if you would like with some local honey.

Enjoy your hot cup of St. John's Wort tea as you relax.

Feverfew (*Tanacetum parthenium*)

Another herb that does contain melatonin is feverfew. This may be a surprise since this herb is famously known as one used to treat headaches but recent studies have also shown that it does contain melatonin. As with St. John's Wort, you can make tea. Unlike the previous herb, you will need to use fresh. To start the process, take the feverfew leaves and chop them.

Take 1 teaspoon of the chopped leaves and place in a tea infuser. Once the water is hot, pour 10 ounces over the infuser and allow the tea to steep for 5 minutes. Next, remove the infuser and enjoy.

Feverfew should only be used as fresh so how do you enjoy its deliciousness year-round? Well, one approach is to grow it inside, which may or may not work for you. Another technique is to take advantage of the herb while it is fresh by making herbal butter that can be used later in the day to add melatonin to your diet. When it comes to making this herbal butter, it is really easy and freezes well for when feverfew is not available fresh.

What you will need for the herbal butter is 7 ounces of butter softened, 1 tablespoon of fresh feverfew leaves, 2 teaspoons each of flat-leave parsley, fresh tarragon, and powdered ginger. You will also need 1 heaping teaspoon of fresh lemon zest, and salt and pepper to taste. Once you have all your ingredients, take your feverfew, parsley, and tarragon to the chopping board and finely chop. Place your softened butter in a bowl and mix the fresh herbs, ginger, and lemon zest into it. Taste and season with salt and pepper as needed.

Now, you can freeze in a log shape or make little herbal butter patties by placing the butter in a silicon muffin tin. Regardless of the shape, this butter is a wonderful addition to an evening meal especially if you feel you need a melatonin boost.

Black Pepper (*Piper nigrum*)

Another herb that you may be surprised contains melatonin is black pepper. Yes, I said black pepper. A recent study tested the leaves of the black pepper plant (*Piper nigrum*) and found that it contains melatonin. Now, black pepper leaves are not something that is easily found but you can find culinary black pepper everywhere. While adding this spice to your food is a great start, another approach is to make golden milk.

Golden milk is simple to make and combines the benefit of tryptophan with black pepper to help you sleep. To begin this recipe, heat up 1 cup of dairy milk. Once warm but not scolding, add ¼ teaspoon turmeric powder, ½ teaspoon of cinnamon, ½-inch piece of fresh, peeled ginger, and a pinch of black pepper. Now, when it comes to the amount of black pepper, remember this is to taste. At this point, keep the heat low under the simmering milk and steep for several minutes.

After the milk has been steeped, remove it from the heat, take out the ginger root, and add honey to taste. Whisk so that all the ingredients are incorporated into the milk. Serve hot or cold.

Each of the following herbs also has unique, beneficial properties that support deep, restful sleep so that you can begin your day on the right foot, refreshed and energetic.

Hops (*Humulus lupulus*)

Hops isn't only for brewing beer, it is also a potent sedative that is an outstanding remedy for sleep issues and anxiety. What's more, hops lowers body temperature, thereby encouraging relaxation and increased sleep time.

Hops also boosts the production of the neurotransmitter gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA), a calming brain chemical.

When combined with valerian, [this herbal duo supports deep, restful sleep and helps to defeat the symptoms of insomnia](#).

Valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*)

Valerian is known for calming the nervous system and improving the quality and length of sleep.

It increases levels of GABA, soothes stress and anxiety, and helps you to fall asleep faster.

German Chamomile (*Matricaria chamomilla*)

A lovely herb with cheerful white flowers and a sunny central disk, chamomile is a popular remedy for gently calming the nervous system and easing stress. It contains the antioxidant apigenin, which can help to induce sleep.

Additionally, chamomile's antispasmodic action relaxes the muscles and soothes body aches that may cause sleep disruption.

Passionflower (*Passiflora incarnata*)

A stunning flower with a long history of use, passionflower helps with a variety of health concerns — including insomnia, ADHD, and anxiety.

When using St. John's Wort and feverfew, it is very important to talk to your doctor before consuming the teas mentioned. Do not drink any tea made from St. John's Wort or feverfew if you are pregnant or nursing. Also, do not give tea to children without a doctor's consent.

Now while these concerns are for St. John's Wort and feverfew, do not neglect to discuss your use of

golden milk if this is something that is used often. Yes, the ingredients are culinary but some herbs can have interactions with certain medications. In doing so, it is better to lean toward the safe side.

While the recipes mentioned above can help with sleep, there are other things that can also be done that work hand in hand with melatonin. Start the day off right by getting some sunlight. Take a break from technology in the evening and set the mood for the evening by dimming the lights early. Lower the temperature of your bedroom to mimic the coolness that one experiences outside during the evening.

Also, make sure that you are eating healthy. There are many foods that contain melatonin and eating a balanced diet can help you with your melatonin levels. The last tip is the hardest to achieve. What is it? Well, you may have already guessed. It is reducing stress. How you do this is truly an individual choice. Meditation is one technique that can help you wind down and be a great habit to develop for the end of the day. Another approach is journaling, which many find helpful since it is a wonderful way of reducing worrying and what some call the "monkey brain" or a brain that will not settle down. Regardless of what evening habit you decide to combine with your melatonin containing herbs, the key is to turn it into a habit that sets the scene for a good night's sleep.

Formulated to help you fall asleep faster and stay asleep longer, the **Sleep Blend Tincture** is a convenient, easy-to-use blend of hops, valerian, German chamomile, passionflower, and magnesium glycinate. Visit the [apothecary](#) today to read about these outstanding herbs for promoting deep, rejuvenating sleep.

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Comments



Shelley Gerow - 2022-05-26 21:48:48

I have been told that I shouldn't take melatonin or valerian due to having poor kidneys. Do you know of anything else that might help with sleep as I am not able to sleep without some help and I don't like taking pharmaceuticals.