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# 8 Natural Remedies That May Help You Sleep

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## Sleep well, sleep better

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Provided by [AOLHealth](#)

If sleep has plunged to the bottom of your to-do list, you're not alone. Although the National Sleep Foundation recommends getting seven to nine hours of sleep a night, the average American logs only six hours and 40 minutes. What gives? Blame crazy schedules and, of course, sleeping woes. Before you rush to the drugstore to buy an [over-the-counter \(OTC\) sleep medication](#), try one of the following natural sleep remedies. "These are safer and have fewer side effects than OTC medications," says Jacob Teitelbaum, MD, author of *From Fatigued to Fantastic* and medical director of the national Fibromyalgia and Fatigue Centers. Many of these can not only help you fall asleep and stay asleep, but they may also promote muscle relaxation.



### **Magnesium and calcium**

Magnesium and calcium are both sleep boosters, and when taken together, they become even more effective. Plus, by taking magnesium, you cancel out any potential heart problems that might arise from taking calcium alone. Take 200 milligrams of [magnesium](#)—lower the dose if it causes diarrhea—and 600 milligrams of [calcium](#) each night.



### **Wild lettuce**

If you've suffered anxiety, headaches, or muscle or joint pain, you might already be familiar with wild lettuce. It's also effective at calming restlessness and reducing anxiety—and may even quell [restless legs syndrome](#). When using a wild-lettuce supplement, take 30 to 120 milligrams before bed.



## Hops

Beer fans will no doubt be familiar with the calming effect of hops, the female flowers used in beer making. For sleep purposes, though, this extract has been widely used as a mild sedative for [anxiety and insomnia](#). Take 30 to 120 milligrams before climbing under the covers.



## Aromatherapy

Lavender is the trick here, as studies have proven that it aids in sleep. It's also a cheap, nontoxic way to slip into a peaceful slumber. Find a spray with real [lavender](#) and spritz it on your pillow before bedtime. Or buy a lavender-filled pillow.



### **Melatonin**

**Melatonin** is the hormone that controls sleep, so it's no wonder that it naturally induces sleep. Although some experts recommend taking higher doses, studies show that lower doses are more effective. Plus, there's concern that too-high doses could cause toxicity as well as raise the risk of depression or infertility. Take 0.3 to 0.5 milligrams before bed.



### **Yoga or meditation**

Choose gentle **yoga** or stretching, not vigorous power or ashtanga yoga, which could energize you instead. Try easy yoga stretches in bed followed by simple **meditation**. Close your eyes and, for 5 to 10 minutes, pay attention to nothing but your breathing.



### **L-theanine**

This amino acid comes from green tea and not only helps maintain a calm alertness during the day but also a deeper sleep at night. However, green tea doesn't contain enough L-theanine to significantly boost your [REM cycles](#). Besides, you might then wake up to go to the bathroom. Instead, buy a brand called [Suntheanine](#), which is pure L-theanine. (Other brands have inactive forms of theanine that block the effectiveness.) Take 50 to 200 milligrams at bedtime.



### **Valerian**

Valerian is one of the most common sleep remedies for insomnia. Numerous studies have found that [valerian](#) improves deep sleep, speed of falling asleep, and overall quality of sleep. However, it's most effective when used over a longer period of time. One caveat? About 10% of the people who use it actually feel energized, which may keep them awake. If that happens to you, take valerian during the day. Otherwise, take 200 to 800 milligrams before bed.