



# Sweet, sweet SLUMBER

THESE SUPER-RELAXING DIETARY AIDS  
WILL HELP ENSURE BETTER SLEEP  
DURING PREGNANCY, SAYS Louise Pyne

**A**sk any expectant mother what's been her greatest pregnancy hurdle and there's a big chance that she'll rate the lack of sleep high up on the list. Between hourly trips to the loo, powerful cravings and niggling aches and pains, 78% of pregnant women experience trouble sleeping which can leave them feeling frustrated and lacking in energy.

If you're longing for a good night's rest to help you feel ready to take on the day, the good news is that making some changes to your diet could help you get a solid stretch of snoozing time. Certain foods double as sleep aids thanks to the nutrients they contain, so read this expert edit of what to eat (and drink) to ensure a restful night's kip. Sweet dreams! ►

*Not only will the omega 3 fats in salmon promote sleep, but they're also essential for fetal brain development*



### MILK

A warm milky drink before bed is an old favourite, and for good reason. "Milk, along with all dairy, contains an important amino acid called tryptophan. Tryptophan helps increase the production of melatonin, a sleep-inducing hormone," explains nutritional therapist Chloe Bowler (chloebowler.com).

**Try this:** Add a teaspoon of honey to your cup of warm milk to help lull yourself into a gentle sleep.

### BANANAS

Leg cramps are a common cause of poor sleep for many mums-to-be, and while the exact cause of cramps is unclear it's thought that munching on bananas could help. "This is because bananas are a well-known source of potassium, a mineral that can help relax muscles," explains Chloe.

**Try this:** Add one sliced banana to a bowl of oats for a hearty, potassium-rich breakfast.

### SPINACH

Rising hormone levels can cause a rollercoaster of emotions which can hamper sleep. One minute you're feeling anxious about the birth, the next you're fearful about how you'll cope looking after a little person. It's natural to feel apprehensive, but try not to worry too much. "Magnesium is a natural stress-buster and could help improve sleep. Found in spinach and other leafy greens, it can decrease stress hormones in the body, which helps you relax and unwind," says Chloe.

**Try this:** Add baby spinach leaves to salads for an instant magnesium hit.

### EGGS

Fluctuating blood sugar levels (which is often a cause of poor sleep) is common during pregnancy. "Eggs are a protein-rich food that may help your blood sugar levels stay stable throughout the night, in turn helping you sleep better," suggests Chloe.

**Try this:** A hard-boiled egg with wholemeal toast offers the perfect combination of blood sugar-balancing protein and complex carbohydrates.

## RISING HORMONE LEVELS CAN HAMPER SLEEP – MAGNESIUM IS A NATURAL STRESS-BUSTER

### CHICKPEAS

"Chickpeas are a great source of vitamin B6 which is involved in melatonin production," reveals Chloe.

**Try this:** Spread 1 tablespoon of hummus over two oatcakes for a healthy afternoon snack.

### SALMON

Salmon can be a great nutritional addition to a pregnancy diet as the omega 3 fats contained in the oily fish help to support fetal brain development. What's more, omega 3 fats also double as a sleep enhancer. "They are thought to help promote rest and good sleep," says Chloe. "Salmon also makes the perfect supper as it is full of protein to help regulate blood sugar levels throughout the night."

**Try this:** Bake your salmon with an immune-boosting ginger, honey and soy sauce glaze.

### GREEN TEA

We're talking about the decaffeinated kind, of course! The ancient Asian tea leaves contain a substance called theanine, which has an array of beneficial properties for expectant mothers. "It is thought to promote sleep and is recognised for reducing stress," says Chloe.

**Try this:** Add a slice of lemon to your green tea for a refreshing cuppa.

### SWEET POTATOES

Sweet potato is a good alternative to regular potatoes thanks to its low GI score – which essentially means it causes fewer blood sugar dips. "It also contains magnesium and potassium, so helps relax muscles," says Chloe. It's also super-soothing on the digestive tract.

**Try this:** Top a baked sweet potato with a spoonful of cottage cheese. **b**