

## For the season of rest in a stressful world...

*Written by Glenda Green*

As we study the great natural elements of health, we must not overlook our daily passage into the realm of personal peace. When we neglect that or fail to remedy recurring problems with sleep, all the rest of our good measures are undermined.

### Here are 8 Natural Remedies That May Help You Sleep

Before you rush to the drugstore to buy an over-the-counter sleep medication, try one of the following natural sleep remedies. They are safer and have fewer side effects. Many of these can not only help you fall asleep and stay asleep, but they can 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 health problems that might arise from taking calcium alone.

#### 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 are already familiar with the calming effect of hops, the female flowers used in beer making. For sleep purposes, 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 an inexpensive, 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. 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 at most 0.3 to 0.5 milligrams before bed.

## **Yoga and 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, and might make you wake up to go to the bathroom. Instead, buy pure, active L-theanine (some brands have inactive forms of theanine that block the effectiveness), and 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. Keep in mind that about 10 percent 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.

## **Common Causes of Sleep Trouble**

Insomnia, which can occur intermittently or for several days or months at a time, is classified as:

1. Difficulty falling asleep
2. Waking frequently during the night
3. Waking too early in the morning and not being able to get back to sleep
4. Waking feeling unrefreshed

Insomnia will affect your hormone levels and accelerate aging, and may also play a role in diabetes, depression and cancer. While it may be tempting to look for a pill to quickly help you sleep, these will not address the top underlying causes of such sleep disorders, which include:

**Stress:** All types of negative emotions, including worry, fear, anxiety, etc., can keep you up at night. Stress tops the list when it comes to pinning down the cause of insomnia and other sleep disturbances.

**Overactive adrenals:** Increased levels of stress hormones in your body can lead to a hyperaroused state that makes it difficult to sleep.

**Eye problems:** People with damage to their optic nerve can have problems sleeping, including difficulty falling asleep, waking up at strange times, sleepiness during the day and insomnia at night.

**Cell phones:** Using a cell phone before going to bed could cause insomnia, headaches and confusion, and may also cut your amount of deep sleep, interfering with your body's ability to refresh itself.

### **Tried-and-True Methods to Help You Sleep**

If you are having trouble sleeping, please do not ignore the problem or simply wait for it to go away. You need quality sleep just as much as you need food, water, and pure air -- and there are very simple methods to help you get yours.

To start, make certain you are exercising regularly. A Stanford University Medical School study found that after 16 weeks in a moderate-intensity exercise program, subjects were able to fall asleep about 15 minutes earlier and sleep about 45 minutes longer at night. However, don't exercise too close to bedtime or it may keep you awake.

Next, address the emotional component of insomnia and resolve some of the emotional stresses that are contributing to the insomnia at a very deep level. The results are typically long lasting and the improvement is remarkably rapid.

Also be sure that your sleeping environment is comfortable and conducive to sleep. This includes keeping the temperature cool, adding in some white noise if you need it and making sure your room is pitch-black. If there is even the tiniest bit of light in the room it can disrupt your circadian rhythm and your pineal gland's production of melatonin and serotonin. For this reason, it is highly recommended to add room darkening drapes to your bedroom, or if this is not possible wearing an eye mask to block out any stray light.



**Being healthy and having fun!**



*Written by Glenda Green*

I was enjoying some chocolate from a friend today and realizing how far we have come in the way of natural health. It used to be that healthy things were the less favorite things we enjoyed. Now, with so much uncovered about great natural food, its delightful to indulge in some things that are just wonderful.

Just a couple of days ago my husband and I went to "The Chocolate Tree" (a vegan eatery) and just delighted in a fresh raw coconut with all the refreshing milk inside. And, there's more good news! If you haven't already heard, chocolate is also good for you!

A new study found that eating about an ounce and a half of dark chocolate a day for two weeks reduced levels of stress hormones in the bodies of people feeling highly stressed. Everyone's favorite treat also partially corrected other stress-related biochemical imbalances.

The research also notes growing scientific evidence that antioxidants and other beneficial substances in dark chocolate may reduce risk factors for heart disease and other physical conditions



## The top five breakthroughs of the decade.



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As part of my job to stay informed about health and wellness, I talk with many physicians and health practitioners, and subscribe to a plethora of trustworthy newsletters. Change in the natural medicine arena happens fast, as illustrated by the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It was filled with both remarkable alternative health breakthroughs and confirmation of tried-and-true favorites. These incredible discoveries and verifications continue to change how we think about disease and give us powerful options to protect our health and even save lives.

Let's take a closer look at what many consider to be the top five breakthroughs of the decade.

### 1. Resveratrol—defies aging at the cellular level

In recent years, we have discovered more health benefits of wine than even the most ardent oenophile (lover of wine) could have imagined. Studies have shown that moderate wine consumption reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease, improves insulin sensitivity, and lowers risk of diabetes and some types of cancer. People who drink wine, especially red wine, are less likely to be obese, suffer with depression, or get Alzheimer's. And in addition to staying healthy, wine drinkers tend to live longer!

Red wine contains resveratrol, a phytonutrient that's also available as a supplement. You may have even seen the coverage highlighting this exciting nutrient's anti-aging promise on *60 Minutes*.

The cardio-protective benefits of resveratrol are broad. It boosts levels of HDL cholesterol and nitric oxide, which relaxes the arteries and improves blood pressure. It thins the blood by inhibiting platelet aggregation and blocks the adhesion of clots to the artery walls, which is the cause of most heart attacks and strokes. It is also a potent antioxidant and anti-inflammatory agent that tends to minimize damage, even if you have a heart attack or stroke.

But resveratrol's benefits go far beyond heart disease. Resveratrol may even slow the aging process.

No doubt, we'll be hearing much more about resveratrol as a solution for a wide variety of age-related disorders in coming years. The recommended dose is 100 mg twice daily with meals.

## **2. Ubiquinol CoQ10—it's critical to your heart and every cell in your body!**

There's no question that if you're over 40, you should be taking a good coenzyme Q10 (CoQ10) supplement every day, at the proper dosage. After all, this substance fuels energy production in every single cell in your body.

The most highly concentrated form of CoQ10 out there is ubiquinol. That's because ubiquinol is identical to 95 percent of the CoQ10 your body produces naturally—so it's easily absorbed and used.

In fact, in vitro research has shown that ubiquinol CoQ10 supplements are up to eight times more bioavailable than ordinary CoQ10 supplements. That's huge!

For years, the only CoQ10 supplements available were of the ubiquinone variety—we simply didn't have the technology to keep ubiquinol stabilized in supplement form until now. The development of this newly stabilized active form of CoQ10 is a significant breakthrough, which should change how we treat a host of degenerative conditions.

I recommend taking 100–300 mg daily of ubiquinol CoQ10.

## **3. Vitamin K2—From overlooked to applauded for arteries, bones, diabetes, and more**

For years, vitamin K has been the neglected stepchild in the world of nutrition, while other vitamins grabbed all the attention. However, groundbreaking research is

propelling vitamin K into the limelight.

This is long overdue because vitamin K has so many health benefits. In addition to protecting against osteoporosis, arterial calcification, heart attacks, and cardiovascular death, it also appears to reduce risk of diabetes and some types of cancer. Because most of us don't get enough vitamin K in our diets, everyone should sit up and take notice.

The most exciting new research on vitamin K focuses on its role in cardiovascular health. In a clinical trial involving nearly 5,000 older Dutch men and women, study participants with the highest consumption of vitamin K had 50 percent reductions in arterial calcification and death from cardiovascular disease, and a 25 percent decline in overall mortality.

I'm excited about a newer form of K2 called menaquinone-7 (MK-7). This natural compound, derived from natto, has a much longer half-life, meaning it stays in the body longer. Therefore, even when taken just once a day and at lower doses, more stable blood levels can be attained.

You will be hearing much more about vitamin K in the future. Studies suggest that this vitamin may also help patients with cystic fibrosis, reduce risk of varicose veins, discourage kidney stone formation, and reduce inflammation—to mention just a few of the latest research frontiers. It also appears to enhance some of the therapeutic effects of vitamin D.

The usual suggested daily dose of vitamin K2 (in whatever form) is 100–150 mcg. If you have arterial disease or osteoporosis, consider taking up to 300 mcg per day. Vitamin K is safe, even at higher levels—*except for those taking Coumadin*.

#### **4. Curcumin—colorful protection against inflammation and overall health**

What's bright yellowish-orange, full of flavor, and found in many Indian dishes? It's an herb called turmeric. And it's not just a boon to the taste buds.

I've told you about the multiple health benefits of curcumin, turmeric's best-known ingredient. Curcumin and other curcuminoids and volatile oils in turmeric have been shown to offer protection against cancer, guard the liver against toxins, inhibit intestinal spasms, and prevent stomach ulcers. This herb is also a very potent antioxidant and anti-inflammatory, making it a great alternative to ibuprofen and other NSAIDs.

To reap these benefits, you can take turmeric powder—the kind you buy in your grocery store—about a teaspoon (5,000 mg) every day. The taste isn't as overwhelming as you'd expect, and the benefits are too plentiful to ignore. Another option is curcumin capsules.

## 5. Vitamin D—the most neglected nutrient

Finally! It's about time everyone realized the pivotal role of vitamin D. And not just as a bone builder. New and emerging research suggests vitamin D may be far more versatile, offering an incredible array of health benefits. Vitamin D also supports a healthy immune system, heart health, normal blood pressure, insulin sensitivity and healthy aging, to name but a few.

New research suggests that fibromyalgia may also be linked to vitamin D deficiency. As many as 40 to 60 percent of all fibromyalgia cases are misdiagnosed. What these patients may actually have is osteomalacia, softening of the bones due to a loss of calcium (essentially adult rickets) caused by vitamin D deficiency. Like fibromyalgia, osteomalacia sufferers have diffuse pain with tenderness at specific points. But while fibromyalgia is extremely hard to manage, osteomalacia has a cure: vitamin D supplements.

If you suffer with fibromyalgia or diffuse chronic pain of any type, talk to your doctor about a blood test to rule out an underlying vitamin D deficiency and, if appropriate, treatment with high-dose vitamin D.

The easiest way to make sure you're getting adequate vitamin D is to get out in the sun for a minimum of 15 minutes of unprotected sun exposure on any part of your body at least three times a week. But even that might not be enough. Plus, not everyone has the luxury of sunshine during this time of year. The only other reliable way of getting vitamin D is to take nutritional supplements.

Unfortunately, the current RDA of 200–600 IU (depending on age) is simply not enough. Researchers tested vitamin D levels in 290 random patients in the Boston area and found deficiencies in more than half—including 43 percent of those who reported taking the RDA of vitamin D!

To ascertain your vitamin D level, ask your doctor for a 25(OH)D blood test, the only accurate test of vitamin D status. Optimal levels are between 50 and 70 ng/mL. If your levels are low, you may need to supplement with 2,000–5,000 IU of D3 per day for a few months and then have your levels retested until you are in the optimal range.