

New study suggests tart cherry juice can be a natural solution for insomnia

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Drinking tart cherry juice daily could help reduce the severity of insomnia and time spent awake after going to sleep, according to a new study published in the *Journal of Medicinal Food*¹.

A team of University of Pennsylvania, University of Rochester and VA Center of Canandaigua researchers conducted a pilot study on the sleep habits of 15 older adults. The adults drank 8 ounces of tart cherry juice beverage (CheriBundi, cheribundi.com) in the morning and evening for 2 weeks, and a comparable matched juice drink, with no tart cherry juice, for another 2 week period. There were significant reductions in reported insomnia severity and the adults saved about 17 minutes of wake time after going to sleep, on average, when drinking cherry juice daily, compared to when they were drinking the juice drink.

Ongoing sleep issues plague more than 40 million adults and another 20 million experience occasional sleep disruptions, putting their health and wellbeing at risk, and leaving many Americans on a quest for sleep solutions, according to the National Institutes of Health. Americans spend more than \$84 million on over-the-counter sleep aids each year².

The researchers suspect tart cherries' natural benefits could be due in part to their relatively high content of melatonin - a [natural antioxidant](#) in cherries with established ability to help moderate the body's sleep-wake cycle. Produced naturally by the body in small amounts, melatonin plays a role in inducing sleepiness at night and wakefulness during the day.

Russel J. Reiter, Ph.D, a biomedical scientist at the University of Texas Health Science Center and one of the world's leading authorities on melatonin, says while melatonin supplement pills have been heavily promoted as a sleep aid, foods such as cherries - available year-round as dried, frozen and juice - may be a better alternative for boosting the body's own supply of melatonin. "When consumed regularly, tart cherries may help regulate the body's natural sleep cycle and increase sleep efficiency, including decreasing the time it takes to fall asleep," says Reiter. "And, because cherries are so rich in other antioxidants, such as anthocyanins, you get other important health benefits."

The Power of Red

Not only is melatonin linked to [sleep](#), but research suggests melatonin can be a powerful antioxidant, helping reduce age-related inflammation and fighting free radicals in the body. Beyond [melatonin](#), cherries are packed with other powerful antioxidant compounds, including anthocyanins - the compounds responsible for cherries' bright red color. A growing body of science indicates that cherries may help reduce inflammation, aid muscle recovery and reduce risk factors of age-related conditions.

More information:

1. Pigeon WR, Carr M, Gorman C, Perlis ML. Effects of tart cherry juice beverage on the sleep of older adults with insomnia: a pilot study. *Journal of Medicinal Food*. 2010;13:579-583.
2. Hossain JL, Shapiro CM. The prevalence, cost implications, and management of sleep disorders: an overview. *Sleep and Breathing*. 2002;6:85-102.

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