

Tart cherry juice drinkers gain sleep advantage

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Americans seeking a better night's sleep may need to look no further than tart cherry juice, according to a new study in the *European Journal of Nutrition*.¹ An international team of researchers found that when adults had two daily glasses of tart cherry juice, they slept 39 minutes longer, on average, and had up to 6 percent increase in overall sleep efficiency (significantly less non-sleep time in bed), compared to when they drank a non-cherry, fruit cocktail.

In a study conducted at Northumbria University, twenty healthy adults drank two servings of tart [cherry juice](#) concentrate (30mL of 100% pure Montmorency juice concentrate per serving, diluted in a half pint of water; provided by CherryActive, Sunbury, UK) or a non-cherry [fruit drink](#) for seven consecutive days at a time – one serving when they woke up, and another before bed. The researchers tracked participant's [sleep](#) habits, and after drinking the cherry juice, they found significant improvements in sleep behaviors, most notably longer [sleep time](#), less daytime napping and increased overall sleep efficiency (the ratio of time spent in bed to time spent sleeping) compared to when they drank the non-cherry juice drink.

The researchers attribute the sleep benefits to the melatonin content of the red Super Fruit – a powerful antioxidant critical for sleep-wake cycle regulation. Each serving of the [tart cherry](#) juice concentrate was estimated to contain the equivalent of 90 – 100 tart cherries, providing a significant level of melatonin in the juice and ultimately in the bodies of the participants.

Previous research has supported the benefits of tart cherries as a sleep aid – a potentially wide-reaching benefit since nearly one-third of all Americans suffer from sleep disturbances affecting their health and wellbeing, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.^{2,3} Currently, Americans spend more than \$84 million on over-the-counter sleep aids each year, leaving many searching for cost-effective ways to help manage their conditions.⁴ While more research is necessary before medical professionals turn to cherries as a sole treatment for sleep disorders, the scientists conclude that tart cherry juice concentrate could be a viable "adjunct intervention for disturbed sleep across a number of scenarios."

More information: 1. Howatson G, Bell PG, Tallent J, Middleton B, McHugh MP, Ellis J. Effect of tart cherry juice (*Prunus cerasus*) on melatonin levels and enhanced sleep quality. *Eur J Nutr*. 2011 Oct 30 [Epub ahead of print].

2. 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.

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