Cherries
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EATING MELATONIN-RICH CHERRIES ARE "NATURAL" WAY TO RESET YOUR BODY CLOCK WHEN CROSSING TIME ZONES

Research Reveals that Cherries Boost Your Body's Melatonin Levels to Help Prevent Jet Lag after Long International Flights

It takes mere seconds to reset our watch to a different time zone, but our body's internal time clocks often take longer to sync up in our new locale. Experienced travelers often stash a bottle of melatonin supplements in their carry-on bag to help adjust, but experts say there may be a more natural and tasty way to get melatonin: cherries.

Recent studies have revealed that cherries are one of the richest known sources of natural melatonin that can help raise melatonin levels in your blood. Tart cherries are sold year-round as dried, frozen, juice and juice concentrate.

Dubbed the "all-natural nightcap," melatonin has been found to hasten sleep and ease jet lag. "Even a slight increase in the melatonin level in the body can improve the body's circadian rhythm or sleep patterns," said Russel J. Reiter, Ph.D., a nutrition researcher at the University of Texas Health Science Center and one of the world's leading authorities on melatonin. Reiter also is co-author of the book "Melatonin" (Bantam). "We've learned that melatonin from food enters the bloodstream and binds to sites in the brain where it helps restore the body's natural levels of melatonin, which can help enhance the natural sleep process," said Reiter.

Several studies indicate that melatonin can be effective as a remedy to aid

sleep and alleviate jet lag – helping to restore normal sleeping patterns in weary travelers. The research suggests melatonin works best when consumed one hour prior to your desired sleep time on the plane and for three or more consecutive evenings after your arrival, depending on the number of time zones crossed.

Dried cherries are a convenient and portable way to get a melatonin boost on the plane. Research conducted by Reiter and colleagues at the University of Texas Health Science Center found that a serving of cherries contains more melatonin than what is normally found in the blood during the day. One serving is ½ cup dried cherries, 1 cup frozen or juice or 2 tablespoons cherry juice concentrate.

Cherries are believed to be one of the most concentrated sources of melatonin. Bananas, corn and oats supply melatonin but in considerably smaller amounts.

Beyond the benefits of helping to reset the body's internal time clock to treat jet lag, melatonin also may be helpful for late-shift workers trying to adjust to a new schedule. Increasing melatonin also has been shown to help with sleep-onset insomnia in older adults with a melatonin deficiency.

"During adulthood, blood levels of melatonin begin to decline and by age 60, levels can be significantly lower, which may account for the sleep disturbances that often occur with aging," Reiter said. "If eaten 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."

Increasing melatonin may do more than promote a restful sleep. Melatonin is a potent antioxidant that has been extensively studied in recent years for its role in reducing inflammation and fighting free radicals in the body, which is linked to increased cancer risk.

A new study published in the journal *Free Radical Research* that was conducted by Reiter and colleagues at the University of Granada in Spain found that melatonin neutralizes the oxidative and inflammation process caused by aging, thereby suggesting that melatonin may play a role in delaying the effects of aging.

Based on the findings of this study, the authors suggest that daily melatonin intake in humans from the age of 30 or 40 could potentially help delay illnesses related to aging.

For more information on melatonin and cherries, visit www.choosecherries.com.

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Source: Rodriguez MI, Carretero M, Escames G, Lopez LC, Maldonado MD, Tan DX, Reiter RJ, Acuna-Castroviejo D. Chronic melatonin treatment prevents age-depended cardiac mitochondrial dysfunction in senescence-accelerated mice. *Free Radical Research*. 2007;41:15-24.