

Balancing body chemicals to aid relaxation.



Some hormones are particularly beneficial to relaxation: Serotonin, Dopamine, Oxytocin, Endorphins and Melatonin.

Serotonin - is an important chemical in our brains which improves our mood and combats anxiety.

When our body absorbs tryptophan from our food it boosts Serotonin production. Healthy carbohydrates i.e. rice, oats or whole grain bread aid the bodies uptake of tryptophan, so when the two foods are eaten in combination, you are likely to experience a serotonin boost.

Foods high in tryptophan

- Dairy products (avoiding cheese)
- Eggs
- Soy
- Nuts
- seeds i.e. sesame and sunflower
- dried dates
- Salmon
- Turkey and chicken
- Whole grains
- Beans and pulses
- Rice
- Pineapple
- Banana



Other activities known to boost Serotonin.

- **Exercise:** Research from the United Kingdom shows that regular exercise can have antidepressant effects. Exercise also increases endorphins.
- **Sunshine:** Light therapy is a common remedy for seasonal depression. Research shows a clear relationship between being exposed to bright light and serotonin levels. To get better sleep, or to boost your mood, try to work in a daily lunchtime walk outside.
- **Positivity:** Research shows that facing daily life and your interactions with others with a positive outlook can significantly boost your serotonin levels.
- **Gut bacteria:** Eat a wide variety of foods and foods high in fibre aids a healthy gut bacteria, which new research shows plays a role in serotonin levels, probiotics may also be of value.

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Dopamine – When dopamine in the body rises the production of cortisol the stress hormone decreases. The production of dopamine in the body is promoted by serotonin. Dopamine aids motivation and focus.

Natural ways to increase dopamine:

- Exercise
- Meditation
- Massage therapy
- Listen to upbeat music
- Cold shower
- Dancing
- Setting and achieve goals

Foods which increase the body's uptake of Dopamine

Banana, probiotic yogurt, avocados, broccoli, oranges, spinach, and Brussels sprouts

Avoid: artificial sweeteners, caffeine and alcohol

Oxytocin – increases **relaxation**, lowers stress and anxiety, lowers blood pressure, and causes muscle contractions. **Oxytocin** is also the hormone involved in social relationships, bonding, trust, and love, often known as the love hormone.

- Give someone a hug
- Have a massage
- Do something altruistic
- Laughter
- Looking at photos of happy memories
- Deep breathing
- Loving kindness meditation
- Listening to soothing music
- Meet or call a friend

Endorphins – boost our mood and reduces the experience of pain. Natural ways to boost endorphins.

- Lavender oil
- Laughter
- Group exercise
- Savour a small piece of dark chocolate
- Eat spicy food
- Eating food high in vitamin B12, vitamin C, zinc, potassium, and iron.

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Melatonin - is important to assist us get a good night's sleep and it aids relaxation. Our bodies require serotonin and dopamine in order to produce melatonin.

Few foods naturally contain melatonin and are therefore great to have at an evening meal or as a light night-time snack:

- Bananas
- Morello cherries
- Porridge oats
- Sweet corn
- Rice
- Ginger
- Barley
- Tomatoes
- Radishes
- Red wine

Other ways to boost melatonin production.

- Black out curtains to block out light.
- No screen time before bed or using night modes which blocks the blue light.
- No TV in the bedroom or a salt crystals lamp.
- If you need the toilet in the night leave the light off.

Other ways to relaxation and promote sleep

- Chamomile tea
- Reduced caffeine and alcohol
- Lavender oil and Frankincense

Aromatherapy for relaxation

Using an oil infuser in your home and bedroom before going to sleep aids relaxation and sleep. It is important to use 100% pure essential oils.

Essential oils which calm anxiety and aid relaxation.

- Lavender
- Frankincense
- Juniper Berry
- Jasmine
- Chamomile
- Rose
- Vetiver