



March is National Sleep Awareness Month

Sleep is an important part of living a long, healthy life. Without it, serious health issues can develop. Sleep is crucial for your health in many ways because it affects brain function, energy levels during the day, hormonal balance, and the ability for the body to repair itself. The National Institutes of Health estimates that sleep-related problems affect 50 to 70 million Americans of all ages and socioeconomic classes.

Here are several ways you can get a better night's sleep:

Eat tart cherries – Cherries are a useful source of melatonin, and since melatonin can travel from the stomach to the brain, cherries have been proved to help insomniacs sleep.

Exercise – Physical activity is health-promoting and is good for sleep. The types of workouts you do and at what time of the day do matter. Strength training at any time is good for better sleep. Cardio workouts in the morning promote deeper sleep. Avoid vigorous exercise at nighttime because it is stimulating and raises your body temperature and heart rate.

Practice meditation and stretching – Including just a few minutes of relaxation before hitting the pillow provides your mind and body peace. Meditation and stretching prepare you to sleep because the act is calming and reduces stress.

Rest your eyes from blue light – 30 minutes before bed, give your eyes a rest from artificial lights like the TV screen, your phone, and lights around the house.

Don't eat right before bed – Avoid eating heavy meals right before bed, but if you must eat something, go for complex carbs and something simple like a slice of whole wheat bread. Carbohydrates are known to make you sleepy because they are rich in tryptophan.

Relax with lavender – Try a mask with this purple flower right before bed or apply its oil on your pillow to help soothe and calm you to sleep.

Whole Wheat Oatmeal Applesauce Banana Bread

Bananas are packed with muscle relaxing minerals like potassium and magnesium and are a great nighttime choice.

133 Calories per serving, serves 12

Cooking Spray

1 heaping cup of mashed banana

1/3 cup honey

1/3 cup unsweetened applesauce

1 tsp vanilla

1 egg

3/4 cup unsweetened vanilla almond milk

1 1/2 cups whole wheat pastry flour

1 cup rolled oats

1 1/2 tsp baking powder

3/4 tsp baking soda

1/4 tsp salt

1 tsp ground cinnamon

Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray 9-inch loaf pan with nonstick cooking spray. In a bowl, combine mashed banana, applesauce, honey, egg, milk, and vanilla until creamy. In separate bowl whisk together the dry ingredients. Add wet ingredients to dry and mix until just combined. Do not overmix. Bake 60-70 minutes or until toothpick inserted into center comes out clean.

Eating Healthy In and Around Rochester

Grocery Stores:

Abundance Cooperative Market – 571 South Avenue, Rochester 14620

Lori's Natural Foods – 9000 Jefferson Road, Henrietta 14623

Natural Oasis Market – 288 Monroe Ave, Rochester 14607

Trader Joe's – 3349 Monroe Ave, Rochester 14618

Restaurants:

Effortlessly Healthy – Meal delivery, Catering, Café, and Food Truck.; 1921 S Ave, Rochester 14620

Fruit and Salad Co – 680 Pittsford-Victor Road, Pittsford 14534

The Owl House – Vegan and gluten free options; 75 Marshall St, Rochester 14607

The Red Fern – Vegan Café; 283 Oxford St., Rochester 14607

Sleep is

an universal prerequisite

to health and happiness.