



Blog of the month – August 2016

Want to sleep better? Eat more barley.

It's true. Research shows that eating fiber-rich foods (like our favorite grain), less saturated fats and less sugar may help you enjoy a better night's rest.

The Journal of Clinical Sleep Medicine recently published findings from a randomized crossover study conducted by researchers at Columbia University. The study was designed to look at the relationship between diet and sleep. Specifically, it looked at the impact of fiber, saturated fats and sugar on sleep. Here are the details (in plain English for all of us non-medical types):

Twenty-six adults of normal weight who typically slept seven to nine hours a night were selected to participate in the five-day inpatient study. For the first four days, the adults ate a controlled diet rich in fiber and with less saturated fats and sugar. For the fifth day, the adults chose their own meal selections.

The subjects' sleep patterns were monitored each night. Sleep patterns remained relatively consistent until night five. On the last night, following a diet of the subjects' choosing, researchers found that the participants experienced less "slow-wave sleep," which refers to deep sleep in lay terms. The participants also experienced an increase in "sleep arousals" which is essentially a shift from deep sleep to light sleep or wakefulness.

The researchers concluded from this study that eating foods lower in fiber, higher in saturated fats and higher in sugar is associated with lighter, less restorative sleep and with more sleep arousals. The researchers went on to say that this study indicates that diet could be a useful tool in managing sleep disorders. But of course, as any good researcher would say, more studies are needed.

In the meantime, eat your barley. And sweet dreams!

Source: St-Onge MP, Roberts A, Shechter A, Choudhury AR. Fiber and saturated fat are associated with sleep arousals and slow wave sleep. J Clin Sleep Med 2016; 12(1):19-24