

THE FOODS
THAT WILL HELP
YOU STAY
ASLEEP, ALL
NIGHT LONG

Eat your way to a
**GOOD
NIGHT'S
SLEEP**

Research by the Institute of Human Nutrition in New York has found that people who follow a Mediterranean diet sleep longer and better than those eating a more typical Western diet. Here, the author of *Fast Asleep*, Dr Michael Mosley, explains how this and other new research can help you to have a better night's sleep.

WHY MEDITERRANEAN?

The traditional Mediterranean diet involves consuming lots of olive oil, nuts, oily fish, legumes and vegetables, which contain anti-inflammatory compounds such as oleic acid, omega-3 fatty acids and polyphenols. We know inflammation leads to arthritis and other painful conditions that keep

people awake at night. We also know that neuroinflammation (inflammation of the brain), which becomes more common as we get older, contributes to poor sleep and dementia. Going on a Mediterranean diet also boosts levels of the 'good' bacteria in your gut – these can, in turn, produce powerful anti-inflammatory agents, as well as 'feelgood' chemicals which reduce anxiety. Since one of the main reasons people stay awake at night is because they are ruminating and fretting, anything that improves mood is likely to be good for sleep.

GROWING YOUR 'GUT GARDEN'

There's good evidence that people who manage to keep their gut garden in good shape as they age not only develop less chronic disease but also sleep more soundly. To boost the good bugs in your microbiome, you could start by eating more prebiotics and probiotics. A prebiotic is a type of non-digestible plant fibre that acts like a fertiliser to encourage the growth of 'good' bacteria in your gut. Some of the best prebiotic foods include:

- Beans and lentils
- Onions, leeks and garlic

- Wholegrains
- Oats
- Barley
- Flaxseeds
- Apples and pears, especially if you eat the skin
- Cocoa

Just as important as feeding our microbiome is ensuring we have the right balance of gut-friendly microbes in the first place. Probiotics are live bacteria or yeast that you parachute into your intestine, in the hope that they will take root and enrich your microbiome. I top up my 'good bacteria' through foods, including Greek yoghurt and cheeses such as gouda, mozzarella, cheddar and cottage cheese, as well as blue cheeses, such as roquefort.

IT'S ALL IN THE TIMING!

Practising time-restricted eating (TRE) really can improve the quality of your shut-eye. You might want to try this popular form of intermittent fasting by having your evening meal a bit earlier and your breakfast a bit later. In a recent study, overweight volunteers who restricted their eating to a 10-hour window (14:10) lost an average of 3.3kg over 12 weeks and most of them also enjoyed longer and less

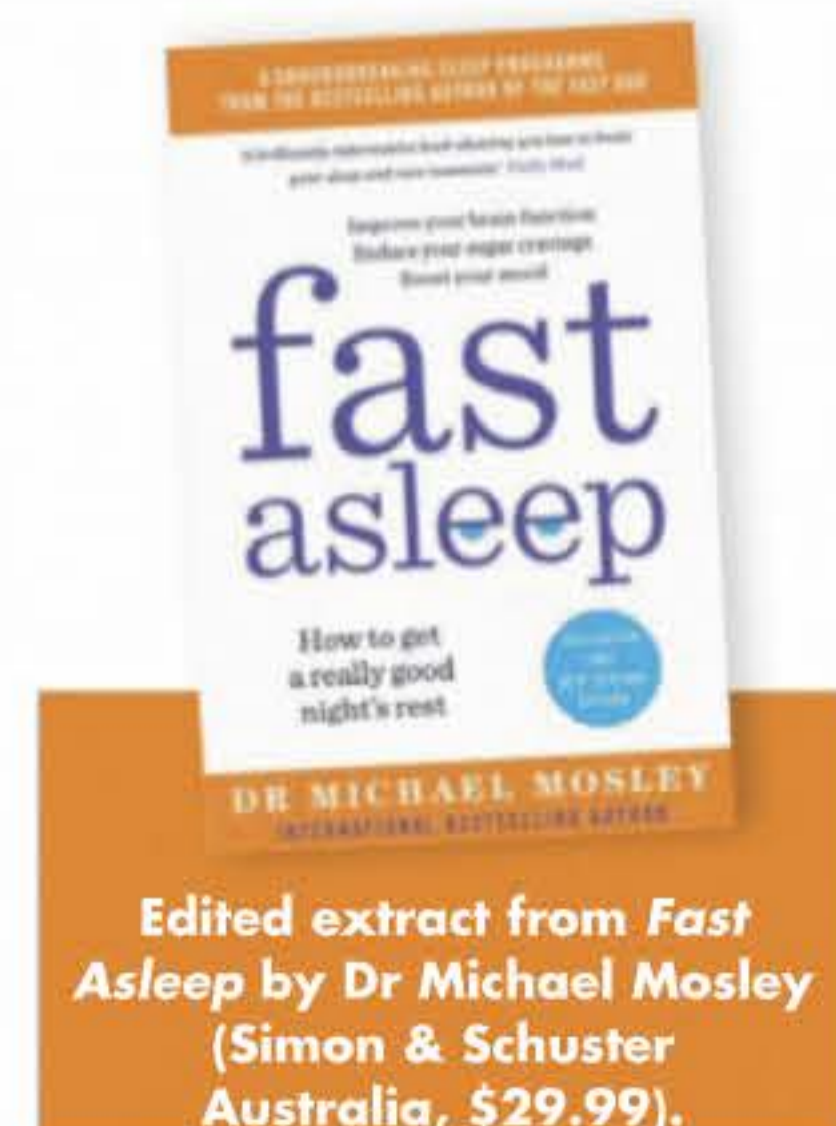


A Mediterranean diet involves consuming lots of olive oil, nuts, oily fish, legumes and vegetables.

interrupted sleep. Getting used to TRE can take time, but most people find they soon adapt. I suggest you start by going 12 hours without eating (12:12) and then try to extend your overnight fast to 14 hours (14:10).

WHAT ABOUT ALCOHOL?

Have an alcoholic drink, if you must, but only with your evening meal. Try to average no more than a glass a day and stick to red wine, which studies have shown is better for you than white.



Edited extract from *Fast Asleep* by Dr Michael Mosley (Simon & Schuster Australia, \$29.99).