

Medical Minute

Medications: Sometimes the Prescription Is in the Produce Aisle

Medications are **usually expensive**, and some come with side effects that are about as much fun as stepping on a Lego barefoot. So before adding *yet another* pill to the daily pile, it may be worth looking at what's already sitting in your kitchen.

Gout? Pop a cherry instead of a pill.

Instead of popping a pill, try popping a tart cherry or drinking tart cherry juice. Cherries contain compounds that may help with the same problem that allopurinol is commonly prescribed to treat-- elevated uric acid.

One study found that drinking 1 cup of 100% tart cherry juice daily for four weeks reduced uric acid and C-reactive protein (a marker of inflammation) by almost 20%. Key words: 100% juice. Not sweetened stuff. It seems that sugar actually triggers gout and raises uric acid levels. Although, fair warning: a whole cup of unsweetened tart cherry juice would be a hard "pill" for me to swallow.

Insomnia? Your bedtime snack may need a makeover.

Oatmeal has always had a reputation as a wholesome breakfast food. But research suggests it might deserve a spot on the bedtime menu too. Oatmeal contains complex carbohydrates that can help increase serotonin, which plays a role in sleep. Another factor associated with insomnia is low folate, a B vitamin. Enter the **kiwi**. Kiwis contain both folate *and* serotonin. Double barreled help!

Who knew the perfect bedtime snack is a bowl of oatmeal with some kiwis on it? Do you believe it? It's a green food I will eat!

Frequent night-time bathroom trips? Have you met pumpkin seeds?

For men dealing with benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) and the dreaded “*Why am I awake AGAIN?*” bathroom trips, **pumpkin seeds** may be worth putting on the menu.

These little green seeds contain plant compounds called sterols. In one study of 1,500 men, eating just 2 tablespoons of pumpkin seeds a day was associated with relief of prostate symptoms. And here's the interesting part: pumpkin seed extract capsules didn't produce the same result. Apparently, the prostate wants the real deal, not the powdered capsule version. Picky.

So before adding another bottle to your medicine cabinet, take a look around your kitchen. Sometimes the pharmacy aisle isn't the only place where you can find something worth taking.   