



# FINDING THE RIGHT SUPPLEMENTS FOR BETTER SLEEP

Not all sleep problems are the same. Some people struggle to fall asleep, others wake often, and some sleep through the night but wake up unrefreshed.

The right supplement depends on which of these is most challenging for you.



## 1 Identify Your Main Sleep Challenge

### • Trouble falling asleep (sleep initiation)

Options sometimes considered: melatonin for short-term or circadian timing support; magnesium or theanine for relaxation support; valerian or passionflower only with clinician guidance, especially if taking medications.

Valerian and passionflower can interact with alcohol, sedatives, medicines used for anesthesia, and some medications. Check with a clinician first if you take regular medicines, psychiatric medications, blood thinners, or heart rhythm medications, or if you are pregnant/breastfeeding.

### • Frequent waking or restless nights (sleep continuity)

Options sometimes considered: magnesium, theanine, or glycine for relaxation and sleep-quality support. If restless legs are present, check iron/ferritin levels with a clinician.

### • Waking up tired (non-restorative sleep)

Helpful options often overlap with continuity supports

### Red Flag Checklist

Before trying supplements, seek medical evaluation if any of these apply:

- Loud snoring, choking, or pauses in breathing during sleep.
- Restless legs, twitching, or jerking movements disrupting sleep.
- Severe or worsening mood changes, hallucinations, or thoughts of self-harm.

- Nightmares, confusion, or unsafe behaviors during sleep (e.g., sleepwalking, acting out dreams).
- Sudden changes in sleep after starting or stopping a medication.
- Persistent insomnia for more than 3 months despite lifestyle adjustments.
- Morning headaches, very dry mouth, or unexplained daytime sleepiness.
- Children, teens, older adults, or pregnant/breastfeeding people considering supplements without medical guidance.
- New reduced need for sleep with unusually high energy, impulsivity, or racing thoughts.



## 2 Start with the Basics

Before layering sleep-specific supplements, check common nutrients that affect sleep:

- **Iron, if ferritin or iron levels are low, with clinician guidance.**

Low iron may contribute to fatigue and can be associated with restless legs, but iron should not be supplemented unless low levels are confirmed or suspected by a clinician.

- **Magnesium**, if intake is low or deficiency is suspected, may support relaxation and stress regulation.
- **Vitamin D**, if levels are low or deficiency is likely. It may be relevant to sleep and mood, but supplementation is mainly for correcting low vitamin D.

**Tip:** It is best to check blood levels for iron, vitamin D, and sometimes magnesium before starting higher-dose supplements.

## 3 Build a Gentle Core Foundation

- A generally gentle starting point for many adults may include:
- **Magnesium** – may support relaxation and stress regulation
- **Theanine** – may support relaxation for some people and is usually less sedating than sleep medications, though drowsiness is still possible.
- **Glycine** – may support sleep quality and next-day alertness for some people; evidence is promising but still growing

This trio may be calming for some adults, but it should not replace care for anxiety, trauma-related symptoms, or persistent insomnia.



## 4 Match Supplements to Your Profile

- **Perimenopausal adult with 2 a.m. awakenings** → magnesium glycinate may support relaxation for some people, but persistent night waking should also be assessed for stress, hot flashes, sleep apnea, medications, mood concerns, or other health factors.
- **Adult with morning fatigue** → glycine may support sleep quality and next-day alertness for some people, but persistent morning fatigue should be assessed for causes such as insufficient sleep, sleep apnea, anemia, mood concerns, medications, or other health issues.

Other options sometimes considered, with clinician guidance when needed:

- **Chamomile** – often used in teas; may have a gentle calming effect for some people. Use caution with allergies to ragweed or related plants
- **Lavender** – aromatherapy may support relaxation for some people. Use clinician guidance before using lavender capsules, especially if taking sedating medications or if pregnant/breastfeeding
- **Tryptophan or 5-HTP**: serotonin precursors; avoid with antidepressants, MAOIs, triptans or other serotonin-raising migraine medicines, and any other serotonin-raising medicines unless specifically supervised by a clinician.



## 5 Support With Habits

Supplements work best alongside healthy routines:

- Keep a regular bedtime and wake time
- Get natural light in the morning, dim lights in the evening
- Limit caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine in the hours before bed
- Reduce bright screen use before bedtime, or use night mode/low brightness if screens are unavoidable.



## 6 Stay Connected

- In the Philippines, check that food and dietary supplements are FDA-registered with the Philippine FDA, when applicable, and avoid products making treatment or cure claims. Be especially cautious with products labeled or marketed as curing insomnia, anxiety, depression, hormonal problems, or other medical conditions. When available, choose third-party tested products. Supplements are not the same as prescription medicines, and strength, purity, and quality can vary.
- **Start low and go slow with dosing**
- More is not always better, especially with melatonin, zinc, iron, or sedating herbs.
- Watch for **interactions** with antidepressants, sedatives, blood thinners, blood pressure medicines, heart rhythm medications, seizure medications, and other regular medications.
- Be mindful of **formulations**:
  - Magnesium glycinate is often gentler on digestion. Magnesium citrate may be helpful for some people but can cause loose stools or diarrhea.
  - Melatonin is often best started at a low dose and used short-term or for circadian timing support unless a clinician advises otherwise.
  - Iron, if low or clinician-recommended, is often taken in the morning with vitamin C, and away from calcium or caffeine.

### Extra caution for certain groups:

- Children and teens → only under medical guidance
- Older adults → higher fall risk with sedating agents
- Pregnancy/breastfeeding → avoid unless prescribed
- Chronic illness (liver, kidney, autoimmune) → check with a provider first

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## 7 Timing and Duration

- **Melatonin** → often 30–60 minutes before bedtime for short-term sleep-onset support, or earlier when used for circadian timing, depending on clinician guidance.
- **Magnesium, theanine, glycine** → evening or as advised by a clinician
- **Iron** → only if low or clinician-recommended; often taken in the morning with vitamin C, not with coffee, tea, or dairy. Keep iron supplements away from children.
- Some supplements, such as magnesium, glycine, or theanine, may be reasonable for longer-term use for some adults, with periodic check-ins.
- Others, including melatonin, valerian, and passionflower, are best framed as short-term, targeted, or clinician-guided supports, especially for children, teens, older adults, pregnant/breastfeeding people, or people taking regular medications.
- Periodic breaks or check-ins with a provider are recommended, especially for ongoing use.

## Setting Realistic Expectations

- Supplements are **not sleeping pills**
- Effects are often subtle and build gradually
- Best results happen when the supplement matches your main sleep problem
- Consistency and patience matter



Start by correcting nutrient gaps, then layer in gentle sleep supports matched to your sleep pattern.

Use supplements as one tool in a larger sleep routine, and always check safety with your provider.