

# alive

ALIVE.COM



*Making eco-cents*  
*10 workout mistakes*  
*Problem prescriptions*

*Learning label logic*  
*Serving up sustainability*  
*West coast Wickaninnish*

**functional**  
**FOODS**  
**UNZIPPED**

# Sleepless in Seattle... or anywhere else?

## 5-HTP offers a solution for slumber

Melina Roberts, ND

Are you chronically tired?  
Are you having trouble  
getting through the day?  
The problem may be that  
you're sleep-deprived.

A good night's sleep is vital to overall long-term health. If a person's sleep is chronically disrupted, this can lead to a cascade of other health problems.

It is during our sleeping hours that our liver is actively detoxifying, our lymphatic system is cleansing, our tissues are regenerating, muscle is being built, fat is being broken down, and major healing is occurring. Sleep is also an antioxidant for the brain,

when free radicals are removed from circulation. One of the ways to support the healing process is to get a good night's sleep.

### Serotonin and sleep

In our body, the proteins we eat are broken down to amino acids. One specific amino acid, tryptophan, is converted to a naturally occurring amino acid, 5-HTP. This amino acid is delivered to the brain and converted to the neurotransmitter serotonin, as well as to other brain chemicals including melatonin, endorphins, dopamine, and norepinephrine.

Serotonin is an important neurotransmitter involved in brain activity responsible for emotions, appetite,

and sleep-wake cycles. Many common lifestyle factors including chronic stress, poor diet, insufficient digestion, and toxic buildup have contributed to low serotonin levels in the brain. Insomnia and other sleep problems are often associated with low serotonin levels, which is why 5-HTP has been shown to be effective for enhancing proper sleep.

### 5-HTP to serotonin

Research has shown that oral supplementation of 5-HTP has the ability to increase sleep quality by increasing REM (rapid eye movement) sleep and deep sleep in stages 3 and 4 without increasing total sleep time. Natural supplements such as 5-HTP, unlike

