

to your doorstep by UPS or FedEx. These foam mattresses can be heavy—100 pounds or more for a queen-size—so you may need a friend to help you move it to an upstairs bedroom. Once you get it there, carefully slice open the packaging to let the mattress return to its original shape; it's actually fun to watch.

When buying a mattress online, don't assume you can't haggle—you can, and you may actually do better because you can maintain a true poker face when you're virtual. Open the chat window, and when the customer-service rep responds, start the bidding.

#### STEP 4 Never Pay Full Price

You'll see mattress sales in the run-up to most holiday weekends, but you don't have to wait for an official sale to get the best price. Mattresses have a huge markup, so don't be afraid to negotiate with gusto. More than half of the readers in our survey paid \$500 to \$1,750 for a mattress; those shoppers who haggled saved a median of \$205. Hagglers were most successful at the mattress specialty stores Mattress Firm, Mattress Warehouse, Mattress King, Sleep Train, and Sleepy's. And shoppers often walked away with something free, such as a mattress protector or bed frame.

Start by asking for a price that's 50 percent off the list price, and ask for free delivery and haul-away, to boot. If that doesn't work, then try one of these questions:

1. What's the lowest price this mattress has sold for?
2. Can I have a price guarantee? If the mattress goes on sale within, say, 30 days, will you refund the difference?
3. Will you give me a discount if I pay cash? (This allows the merchant to avoid paying credit card fees.)

If you get a no to any of these, you can just say goodbye and walk out the door. After all, there's another mattress store right down the block.

#### STEP 5 Make Good Use of the Trial Period

When your new mattress arrives, prepare to be patient. Bear in mind that your old mattress is familiar to you, flaws and all. Mattress sellers typically offer anywhere from three weeks to three months for you to try out your purchase. Others offer what they call a comfort guarantee. So before you buy, study the small print for the trial-period terms and ask whether and how you can return the mattress if you discover you don't like it.

Give yourself at least two weeks to make up your mind. During that time, focus on the mattress and not your bedding—you want to limit the number of variables. "Stick with the same pillow for a while, so you can tell better whether it's the mattress or the pillow that may be disturbing your sleep," says Steven Scharf, M.D., Ph.D., director of the Sleep Disorders Center at the University of Maryland

## Can You Snack Your Way to Sounder Sleep?

*Some surprising late-night snacks are showing promise in helping insomniacs*



#### Sweet Slumber

Kiwis may help you stay asleep longer.

WARM MILK HAS long been considered the ultimate sleep inducer (a cookie chaser notwithstanding), but research has yet to bear that out. A recent review of studies on diet and sleep in the journal *Advances in Nutrition* suggests that a few other foods may actually be more effective—notably kiwi fruit, malted milk, and tart cherry juice. The studies were small, and it's far too early for definitive conclusions, says the review's lead author, Marie-Pierre St-Onge, Ph.D., an associate professor of nutritional medicine at Columbia University's department of medicine. But findings to date hint at some benefits.

Eating two kiwis one hour before bedtime was found to help adults with self-reported insomnia fall asleep faster and stay asleep longer. In two other studies, people (especially older adults) who had 1 to 1½ cups of warm Horlicks malted milk beverage—a concoction of dairy, malted barley, and wheat flour sold in powdered form online—30 minutes before bedtime were less restless during sleep. Additionally, drinking 1 cup of tart cherry juice in the morning and at night quelled insomnia and

reduced midnight awakenings in two small studies, one with healthy adults and another with people with chronic insomnia.

How or why might those foods work? None of the studies investigated the mechanisms, but in her review St-Onge notes that cherries and kiwis have antioxidants that may protect against cell damage and inflammation, characteristics often found in people with sleep disorders. The melatonin in cherries and the serotonin in kiwis may improve sleep. What's more, kiwis are rich in folate, a vitamin that helps synthesize brain chemicals involved in sleep, such as dopamine and serotonin. Deficiencies in folate have been linked to insomnia and restless leg syndrome. As for Horlicks milk, it contains B and D vitamins; deficiencies in those vitamins have been linked to sleep disruptions.

Even though the findings are not definitive, St-Onge says there's no harm in giving any one of these dietary remedies a try. They easily fit into a healthy diet and, in fact, are a much safer choice than prescription and over-the-counter sleep aids or supplements (see pages 24 and 25).

—Julia Calderone