

## QUESTION OF THE WEEK

**Q:** What natural ways can aid sleep?

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Lemon balm, *Melissa officinalis*, is also called the “gladdening herb” for its ability to alleviate melancholia. Lemon balm is the tender cousin of mint, but smells and tastes like lemons. It can be added to iced tea for a refreshing twist, and its essential oils are used in furniture polish and perfumes. The leaves are edible and may be used in salads, baked goods or in bath water as aromatherapy.

Medically, the main uses are for restful sleep, to relieve painful menses, and digestive upset caused by irritable bowel syndrome. Lemon balm contains the essential oils citronella, neral and geranial, as well tannins and the flavonoid cumarin.

For undisturbed sleep free of nightmares, take five fresh leaves, pour steaming water in a cup, and cover it for 10 minutes to prevent the essential oils from escaping. When used along with valerian root at bedtime, lemon balm may be as effective as prescription sleeping pills but without side effects.

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