

The Sleep/Exercise Connection



Exercise plays a key role in stress/anxiety management, weight control and disease prevention, but it often isn't credited for the role it plays in sleep quality. People who exercise regularly fall asleep faster and wake up less. Better sleep quality helps us wake up more refreshed and more energetic. And studies show it takes just 20 to 30 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise a few days a week to improve your sleep. So, to sleep better, the question isn't *should* you work out, but *when*?



MORNING—BEST FOR CARDIO

CONSISTENCY. The most practical benefit of a morning exercise is consistency. Completing your workout before the day's demands interfere is cause enough to consider a morning workout routine.

HORMONE REGULATION. Exercise produces good hormones, such as adrenaline, which wakes you up and enhances mental strength for the day ahead.

CIRCADIAN RHYTHM. For the best morning workout results, get outside. Regular morning exercise outdoors activates light sensitive tissue in the eye, which signals the body to produce melatonin earlier in the evening.



AFTERNOON—BEST FOR LOWER RISK OF INJURY

LOWER RISK OF INJURY. Body temperatures are typically one to two degrees warmer in the afternoon, helping your muscles work more efficiently and lowering risk of injury when doing complex movements.

BODY TEMPERATURE. Afternoon aerobic workouts can raise your body's temperature for about four to five hours. Afterwards, your core temperature decreases, which signals the body to begin shifting into sleep mode.



EVENING/NIGHT—BEST FOR STRENGTH & YOGA

HEAVY LIFTING. When possible, schedule strength training for after work. Resistance training won't spike the body temperature in the way aerobic exercise does, which can interrupt the natural wind-down process.

YOGA. Yoga or simple stretches are ideal before bedtime. Both deepen your flexibility, builds strength and help you to unwind for a restful night's sleep.

BETTER THAN NOTHING. While morning aerobic workouts support natural circadian rhythms, experts agree that a nighttime cardio workout is better than no workout at all.

***DISCLAIMER:** Keep in mind that everyone's body is different. Some people report that, rather than disrupting their ability to fall asleep, nighttime exercise leaves them so tired, they fall asleep more quickly. Experiment and see what's right for you.