



# CAN'T SLEEP? TRY EXERCISE!

## HOW EXERCISE CAN IMPROVE YOUR SLEEP

I get it. When you are tired, the very last thing you probably want to do is exercise!

However, research indicates that the more you move your body, the better you feel. Not only that, but exercise helps improve sleep quality! In fact, research has shown that physical activity can be as effective as prescription sleep medications.

This relationship can also go the other way, too. The better you sleep the night before, the easier it is to exercise the next day!

### HOW CAN EXERCISE IMPACT YOUR SLEEP?

1. Exercise increases the overall amount of time you spend in slow-wave sleep – also known as the deep sleep. Slow wave sleep is the most restorative stage of sleep, where human growth hormone is released, your heart rate and breathing slow, and your body physically repairs itself.
2. Exercise also increases the amount of time you spend in REM sleep, the stage in sleep that is tied to cognitive performance.
3. Exercise increases your sleep drive, or need for sleep. This is because after a great workout, your body needs time to recover and sleep is a great way to do that!



4. Finally, exercise provides a significant reduction in your stress levels. Stress is strongly associated with sleep troubles – as nearly half of adults assert that stressful thoughts keep them lying awake at night! However, the endorphins that are released during exercise boost your mood, reduce your stress, and contribute to a better night's sleep!

### ***On the other hand, sleep can improve your exercise!***

People who experience restless or insufficient sleep tend to be less active than their well-rested peers. Individuals with sleep disorders, like insomnia or sleep apnea, also tend to be less physically active than those who sleep well. This may be due to the symptoms of these sleep disorders — including fatigue, daytime sleepiness, and low energy — which may make it challenging to feel motivated to work out.

Bad sleep is also a predictor for low activity levels. Just one night of poor sleep can impact your workout the following day. Long-term studies show that people who experience poor sleep become less physically active than those who have a high quality of sleep.

### **WHEN IS THE BEST TIME OF DAY TO EXERCISE?**

The best time of day for exercise depends on YOU!

Historically, experts cautioned against exercising at night. Exercising is an energizing activity that raises your core body temperature, which is the opposite of what happens before sleep. Your body temperature naturally lowers in the evening, about two hours before bed, signaling to your brain that it's time to fall asleep.

However, the increase in body temperature and energizing effects of exercise may wear off in 60 to 90 minutes. More recent research has found that as long as you complete your workout at least that long before bedtime, it may not interfere with your ability to sleep. Studies show that low- to moderate-intensity exercise, such as yoga or walking, can be performed at night with no impact on sleep.

Vigorous exercise may be more effective in boosting sleep if it's performed earlier in the day — giving your body plenty of time to cool back down.

Some studies have found that people who exercise in the morning fall asleep faster, while those who work out at night take longer. There is also evidence that those who wake up and work out earlier tend to be more physically active than their night-owl peers. If you'd like to switch from night owl to early bird, or vice versa, you'll be happy to hear that



exercise can help shift your circadian rhythms, or sleep-wake cycle. For example, night owls can shift the circadian cycle forward by working out in the morning.

To find the best workout time for you, try keeping an exercise diary for a couple weeks. Note when you exercised, the type of exercise you did, how long it took you to fall asleep, and whether your sleep was restful. Adjust the time of day you exercise, and you'll be able to see whether morning or late-night exercise is a better choice for you.

## **7 TIPS TO GET A BETTER NIGHT'S SLEEP**

1. Aim for 30 minutes of exercise a day, up to 5 days/week! If you are battling severe fatigue, you can break the time up into two 15-minute, or even three 0-minute segments!
2. Limit your caffeine intake. Caffeine can help regulate your waking body temperature and regulate your energy, however too much caffeine can cause a dependency. Consuming caffeine too close to bedtime will have a direct effect on your body's ability to naturally secrete the chemicals it needs to slow down and fall asleep.
3. Use Calming Methods, like chamomile tea. Chamomile Tea has long been recognized for its sleep-inducing effects. It also helps to reduce anxiety and depression.
4. End the evening with a warm bath. A warm bath soothes muscles and helps them relax. This will help calm your mind as you use heat to relax your muscles!
5. Be sure your sleep environment is conducive to a good night's sleep! The best sleep temperature is between 60-72 degrees Fahrenheit. Be sure you have a good mattress and comfortable pillow. Eliminate clutter, and opt for a white noise machine to help drown out noise around you.
6. Aromatherapy can be a great way to induce sleep! There are several scents that induce sleep, including lavender vanilla, and jasmine.
7. Reduce blue light exposure in the evening. That's right, put your phone down!

**IN CONCLUSION, EXERCISE IS MEDICINE, BUT SLEEP IS KEY TO A GOOD QUALITY OF LIFE! BOTH ARE NEEDED!**

