

# Workouts THAT Work FOR YOU

## Finding the Best Time of Day to Get Active

There's been a lot of debate around the best time to exercise—is it ideal to do it first thing in the morning? During your lunch hour? Is it a good idea to exercise at night? To be sure, there's a good amount of research on the topic. Here's what you need to know.

### What's the best time to exercise?

Most experts will agree that any time you can find to exercise (without compromising other areas of your well-being) is the best time to exercise. After all, lack of time is one of the most common reasons adults say they're not regularly active. So, if the afternoon is the best time for you to carve out some body-loving movement, you should stick to that. That being said, if your schedule is flexible you may want to consider experimenting to find the time of day that leaves you feeling energized and able to make the most of your workout.

### How to find your exercise "sweet spot"

When it comes to finding the ideal time to exercise there's a lot to consider, and most of it is specific to your unique needs. Here are some key items and questions to consider:

Do you commonly miss workouts during the day due to distractions and scheduling conflicts? First off, remember that you are deserving of making your self-care a priority on your daily calendar. With that being said, oftentimes putting yourself first before your hectic workday begins can be the easiest for scheduling. Moreover, early exercisers often say that a morning routine leaves them feeling more energized and productive during the day.

» **Take note:** If you experiment with early morning workouts consider keeping a workout journal to hold yourself accountable to that self-care appointment, and make note of how you feel throughout the day. Are you hitting the snooze button? Do you feel energized or groggy during the rest of the day? Do you have problems falling asleep? If you struggle to fall asleep, intense workouts close to your bedtime could prove problematic. One recent study revealed that vigorous exercise an hour before bed could delay sleep and disturb sleep quality.<sup>10</sup>

» **Take note:** Keep a sleep log and track how easily you can fall and stay asleep.

Also, make note of the days and times you exercise. This will help give you an idea of whether morning or evening workouts have any impact on your sleep. Do you often "bring work home"? If you often worry and think about work long after the work day is done, evening exercise can be a great way to de-stress, refocus on taking care of yourself, and leave your workday behind you.

» **Take note:** Be conscious of performing strenuous exercise too close to your bedtime, as cited above, it could possibly have a negative impact on your sleep. Remember, carving out time and space to make your physical wellness a priority is important. How you choose to get there is up to you. Take time to consider your schedule and preferences to find the best way to make your workouts work for you.

### In praise of PM workouts!

One scientific study revealed that strength and flexibility are greatest in the late afternoon and that perceived exertion (meaning how hard you feel that your body is working) is lowest.<sup>11</sup>



<sup>10</sup> Stutz J, Eiholzer R, Spengler CM. Effects of Evening Exercise on Sleep in Healthy Participants: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis. *Sports medicine*. 2019;49(2):269–287

<sup>11</sup> [https://journals.lww.com/nsca-jscr/Fulltext/2012/07000/The\\_Effect\\_of\\_Training\\_at\\_a\\_Specific\\_Time\\_of\\_Day\\_33.aspx](https://journals.lww.com/nsca-jscr/Fulltext/2012/07000/The_Effect_of_Training_at_a_Specific_Time_of_Day_33.aspx)