



DAY 01 - SLEEP CHALLENGE

LIVE THE FLOURISHING LIFE: FLOURISHING FITNESS

Sleep is an essential factor in human health, but one that is often overlooked in our focus on exercise and healthy eating. Our performance-driven culture encourages us to spend hours on a perfect diet and workout regimen to achieve our health and fitness goals. But we're doing ourselves a disservice if we prioritise these things over our sleeping habits. Poor sleep has physical and mental health repercussions which significantly impact athletic performance and overall health—that's why our first challenge is to get seven to nine hours sleep tonight.

SLEEP, PHYSICAL HEALTH & PERFORMANCE

Research has shown that insufficient and poor-quality sleep contribute to a wide range of negative health outcomes. In the short term, sleep deprivation can cause high cholesterol, blood pressure and blood sugar, inflammation, irregular heartbeat and hormonal imbalance. It also compromises natural immune responses, leaving you susceptible to illness. In the long term, increases your risk of suffering from type two diabetes, heart disease, stroke, hypertension, and gastrointestinal diseases. While any direct association between lack of sleep and weight gain is questionable, its negative impacts on your body will certainly hold you back from maintaining a healthy lifestyle and reaching your fitness goals.

Not only will sleep deprivation cause limiting physical symptoms, but it has also been shown to have a direct impact on athletic performance. Research shows that sufficient sleep is crucial for speed, accuracy and reaction time. Subjects also reported decreased fatigue and improved feelings of physical and mental well-being during exercise.

SLEEP & MENTAL HEALTH

As well as physical benefits, sleep has several benefits for your mental health which will support you when you face challenges in your fitness journey. Sleep deprivation has been shown to cause depressive symptoms which will make it much more difficult to have the resilience and can-do attitude needed to achieve your goals. It's also important to make sure you are living a balanced life and have a strong support network. Getting enough sleep benefits your relationships, as deprivation impairs your ability to judge emotions in others and read social cues.

DAY 01 SLEEP CHALLENGE

LIVE THE FLOURISHING LIFE: FLOURISHING FITNESS

and increases symptoms such as moodiness, impatience and irritability. As an added bonus, good sleep can also boost your performance in other areas of life—it has been shown to lead to improvements in cognition, memory and several forms of neural processing, and to reduce mistakes and lapses of attention.

GETTING BETTER SLEEP

Health experts recommend adults get seven to nine hours of sleep at consistent times each night. But with so many demands on our time and attention, how can we achieve this?

Light up your days (but not your nights).

- Exposure to natural and bright light improves wakefulness during the day and sleep at night by regulating your body clock, so try to spend time in the sunlight—it's good for your mental health too! If this is tricky, bright artificial lighting also has similar effects.
- On the same token, exposure to electrical light—especially blue light—in the late evening disrupts your body clock and impacts sleep. It can also have a detrimental effect on thermoregulation, blood pressure and glucose levels. Avoid looking at bright screens for two to three hours before bedtime—if you need to, set your device or install an app to filter out blue light at night-time, or try blue-light-blocking glasses.

Watch what you drink.

- We all know that coffee before bed is a no-no, but research shows that the disruptive effects of caffeine on your sleep last six hours at minimum. Keep away from substantial caffeine at least six hours before bedtime—and if you can't resist, stick to decaf.
- Alcohol has also been shown to have negative effects on sleep for two nights after consumption, so limit your intake where possible.

Get in a routine.

- Set a time to go to sleep and a time to wake up, and stick to them. This helps to let your body know when it's time to sleep and naturally get you there.
- Schedule in a relaxing activity before bedtime. This can be anything that relaxes you, but hot bath, shower or even foot-bath are particularly effective in facilitating earlier sleep onset and better quality of sleep.

Optimise your space.

- It's worth it to invest in some quality bedding. It has been shown to significantly improve sleep quality and ease body pain and stiffness—both of which will be beneficial to your ability to exercise.
- Bring the temperature to around 18 degrees celsius to decrease disruptions to your REM sleep.
- Noise can also have a significant impact. Try products like earplugs or a white noise machine to block out sound.