



THE HABITS THAT CHANGE YOUR SLEEP (FOR GOOD)

BY JENN DEFREITAS, ATC



Sleep is an essential function and part of maintaining your body's health. So why do we so often neglect this vital piece of regeneration? Because, it can be easy to **sabotage our own recovery** by staying up late, sleeping in, and throwing our internal clock off track. But even beyond the weekend wobble, we often overlook the basics: setting the stage for quality sleep in the first place. Practicing good sleep hygiene lays the foundation for better cognitive function, improved mental and physical health, a stronger immune system and an overall enhanced mood.

A ROUTINE FOR THE BETTER

So what does "sleep hygiene" actually mean? Think of it as your pre-sleep blueprint: the habits and routines that guide your body from go-mode to recovery.

Establishing a bedtime schedule and routine is an essential start to improving sleep quality. A consistent routine helps train your body and mind to wind down, setting the stage for overall better sleep quality. According to the **National Sleep Foundation**, consistent bedtime routines have also been linked to better stress management, alertness and even a lower risk of all-cause mortality.

The first step in establishing a bedtime routine is choosing a consistent time to go to bed and a few relaxing activities that help you wind down. Try these relaxing activities:



- **Reading** - a quiet way to shift your mind out of work mode



- **Taking a warm bath/shower** - helps to lower your core temperature and prep your body for sleep.



- **Listening to soothing music or a podcast** - gentle background noise that slows your pace.



- **Meditation** - helps calm racing thoughts and settle your nervous system



- **Light stretching** - eases muscle tension and signals your body it's time to rest.

Once you've settled on your routine, start it about 30-60 minutes before bed each night. That consistency builds a mental link between those habits and sleep. And remember what **doesn't** belong in your wind-down - *screens*. TV, phones, and tablets keep your brain alert and make it harder to fall asleep, even when you feel tired.

FOR GOOD SLEEP

Of course, your routine is only half the story. *Where* you sleep matters just as much as how you prepare for it. Thankfully, creating a sleep sanctuary is easier than it sounds! **Harvard Medical School** lists the following simple things we can do to help foster an optimal sleeping environment, allowing us to fall asleep quicker and stay asleep.



- **Reduce or mask noise** - heavy curtains can help block outside noise while white noise machines can help mask it.



- **Minimize light** - heavy curtains can also shield light as well as outside noise. That's a win-win!



- **Keep the temperature cool** - most people sleep better when the room temperature is between 65°F to 68°F.



- **Only use the bedroom for sleep and intimacy** - this creates a mental connection that your bedroom is associated with sleep, helping you fall asleep quicker.

Keep electronics in another room. This helps strengthen the mental connection that your bedroom is for sleep and also eliminates any possible distractions or noises from electronic devices

As an industrial athlete, it's important to prioritize quality sleep - especially since the recommended quantity of sleep (7-9 hours according to **us** and the **CDC!**) can be difficult to attain. Sleep is when the body resets and repairs itself. Poor sleep hygiene can lead to not only injury, but it can also set the stage for many sleep disorders and sleep deprivation conditions. If you sleep right, you *Work Right!*

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