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Share on PinterestCavan Images/Getty ImagesWhile some people are up at the crack of dawn to lace up their running shoes, others can't fathom a workout before noon. When your priority is just to squeeze in some exercise, finding the perfect time can be as much about personal preference as it is physiology. Still, you may wonder whether one time is better than another for reaching your best times on the treadmill or making gains at the weight bench. Exercise is supposed to feel good — but if your muscles are tight in the morning or working out too late disrupts your sleep, it can feel counterproductive. Here's a look at the pros and cons of working out at different times of the day. When the alarm goes off, the last thing most people want to do is roll out of bed, lace up their sneakers, and head to the gym. But there are some awesome advantages to a morning workout worth considering. Your habit may be more consistent. We've all been there: the day starts and you think, "I'll work out later when I'm done with a few things." But then the evening rolls around and what's the one box on your to-do list left unchecked? Of course, it's the gym. Recent research says that it's easier to stay consistent with morning workouts because most people have fewer social and work events planned for the morning. It's also pretty easy to add exercise to an existing morning routine. Other research shows that while study participants stuck to their workout routines no matter if they worked out in the a.m. or p.m., adherence was highest in the morning group. OTOH, afternoon and evening workouts may conflict with other responsibilities as the day progresses. Plus, a full day's work can take a serious toll on willpower, which can overcome any gym-goer's best intentions. You may find that it's easier to keep a morning workout routine consistent. Head out the door before you even have time to second-guess yourself, and by the time you're 100 percent awake, you'll already be on the machines. More free time. Think about it. If you're already done working out by the time 5 p.m. rolls around, you have more time to hang with your friends or fam or spend more time doing things you enjoy (like, a hobby). You might have less pain. If you currently use movement and exercise as a way to manage chronic pain, it might be worth switching to an a.m. workout. One study found that people that worked out in the morning experienced less bodily pain than people that worked out in the evening. You might sleep better. Morning workouts might also be a good option if you're the tossing-and-turning type. One study showed that people who exercise in the morning tend to sleep more efficiently (aka spend less time lying in bed awake) and have fewer awakenings during the night. Another study found that morning exercise can help people with insomnia sleep better. Research on this isn't definitive though — some studies have found that evening exercise helps improve sleep too. But it's safe to say that most studies have found that morning workouts are more beneficial for sleep. So, if you currently hit the gym at 7 p.m. and don't sleep all that well, it might be worth trying 7 a.m. instead. You'll be less hungry. A review of studies found that exercise can help curb appetite after working out. Another study found that women who worked out in the morning had a much lower calorie intake compared to those who worked out in the evening. If you'd like to keep hunger at bay later in the day, a morning workout might be for you. You may burn more fat. It's also been proven that people can burn more body fat exercising on an empty stomach — much easier to do first thing in the a.m. than at night. If you can't fit in a workout in the a.m., don't sweat it (literally). There are plenty of reasons why exercising later in the day can be a smart choice too. You might perform better. Multiple studies have found that peeps perform better at short-duration maximal exercise (like all-out swimming and cycling, jumping, sprinting, and resistance exercises) in the evening. There are ways to improve morning workout performance — like warming up or working out at the same time every day — but when all else is equal, evenings have the advantage. You're already warmed up. Your body temp is naturally higher in the evening, so your muscles are warmer. Warmer muscles are associated with better performance. In fact, researchers found that being exposed to warm weather/humid conditions and doing pre-workout warmups can make morning workout performance more on par with an evening performance. So, while you can make changes to improve morning workout performance, your bod already has a natural edge at night. You might get bigger gains. A study found that people who worked out in the evening gained more muscle mass between weeks 13 to 24 of consistent training than people who worked out in the morning. If you're trying to gain some serious muscle, evening workouts might do ya better in the long term. Hormone levels also play a role in determining optimal workout time. Testosterone is important for muscle growth and strength — as well as stamina — no matter your sex. The body may produce more testosterone during late afternoon resistance training than it does during morning workouts. You might be more motivated to actually work out. Motivation is a huge obstacle for lots of people. Working out is hard, right?? One study suggests that it's harder to stay motivated to stick to a prolonged training program that takes place in the morning. So, if getting to the gym is your biggest issue, evening workouts might be easier to stick to in the long run. Some research shows that your chronotype (aka whether you're a morning person or an evening person) plays a role in when you perform best. If you like to work out in the morning, that's amazing. If you like working out in the evening, keep doing your thing. But if your current workout sched isn't working for you, it's possible to change. Research suggests the body could get used to regular sweat seshes, so if you hit the weight room every day at 4 p.m. (or any other time), eventually you might perform better than at other times of the day. These findings are similar to other research, which suggests that the body could adapt to regular exercise by altering your circadian rhythm. In the end, working out is good for you no matter what time of day you do it. If you want to take it up a notch, consider being more consistent. Research shows that peeps who work out consistently at the same time of day see better results, regardless of whether they choose morning, noon, or night to hit the gym. If working out in the morning is best for your schedule, just make sure to warm up muscles that might be cold and tight from sleep. And to keep afternoon workouts consistent, treat them as unbreakable appointments, find a workout buddy, and keep a gym bag in the car or office to minimize excuses. In the end, it's most important to find a realistic, consistent workout schedule, no matter what the time. Media Platforms Design Team. It happened again. You start off the day eating a healthy breakfast. Then, despite all your good intentions, you find yourself munching an entire bag of potato chips on the couch right before bed. What gives? Don't worry: You're not alone. Around the world, the quality of people's food choices takes a nosedive as the day goes on, according to Eatery, an app that tracks daily snacks and meals from users in more than 50 countries. "For every hour in the day after breakfast, there is a 1.7 percent overall decrease in healthfulness of the food we eat," says Aza Raskin, cofounder of Massive Health, the app developer. That's not exactly surprising to any of us who have made the daily trip to the office vending machine at 3 p.m. But what exactly triggers us to make poor food choices throughout the day? (Eat what you want, when you want—and watch the pounds disappear! Pick up Eat This, Not That! today.) With the help of Alexandra Caspero, R.D., owner of weight-management and sports-nutrition service Delicious-Knowledge.com, here are simple tweaks you can use to quiet your cravings and banish your bulge for good. 8 a.m.: After last night's chip binge, you vow to eat healthy today. You eat a banana for breakfast on your way to work. The problem: "You need to eat more breakfast," says Caspero. Your brain runs on carbs. That means you need to consume more fuel in the morning if you want to stay focused until lunch. The fix: Eat an egg sandwich on whole grain bread. It will give you the brain-boosting carbs you need. Plus, your body digests the fiber- and protein-filled foods at a slower rate, so you stay fuller for longer. (Eat 6 More Snacks to Increase Your Brainpower.) 10 a.m.: You're having trouble concentrating on that Excel file. You guzzle another cup of coffee. The problem: "Excess caffeine raises the amount of the stress hormone cortisol in your body," explains Caspero. It can cause your blood sugar to rise and fall, too. This may make you crave sugar or refined (unhealthy) carbs. The fix: Limit yourself to one or two caffeinated beverages each day. 12:30 p.m.: Your stomach growls. That banana is long gone by now and you're starving. You head to the cafeteria and scarf down pizza. The problem: "No one makes good food choices when they're famished," says Caspero. "In order to get quick energy, your brain seeks fast, high-calorie food." But these foods won't keep you full for long. (Here are 5 Healthy Foods That Will Fill Your Belly.) The fix: Pack a lunch, Caspero advises. That way you won't be tempted to grab whatever is fastest and easiest. 3:30 p.m.: You're hungry and tired, so you eat a granola bar at your desk. The problem: "Most granola bars are just glorified candy bars," admits Caspero. "They contain lots of sugar, which provides energy for a very short period of time." But when the sugar effects wear off, you're just as exhausted and hungry as you were pre-snack. The fix: Eat protein-packed foods that will fire you up for the rest of the workday. "Try string cheese or trail mix," says Caspero. 8 p.m.: Déjà vu. You munch on potato chips while watching television. The problem: Since this is your nightly routine, your brain associates watching TV with snacking, says Caspero. The fix: Like any bad habit, you need to quit so it doesn't rule your decisions. Reprogram your body by stopping cold turkey. No way that's happening? Grab a low-calorie snack like air-popped popcorn sprinkled with curry powder. And if it's a little later, just go to bed. Research shows sufficient sleep may prevent overeating the next day. More from MensHealth.com:





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