

AIM7

Ultimate sleep cheat sheet



"Sleep is the golden chain that ties health and our bodies together."

Thomas Dekker

Sleep isn't just what we need to do when we're tired. It's an essential biological process that is required for us to grow, adapt, and thrive. It is necessary for both physical and mental function, and it is widely considered the most potent recovery strategy for the body.

SLEEP SERVES 3 PRIMARY & CRITICAL FUNCTIONS

1

Detoxification

2

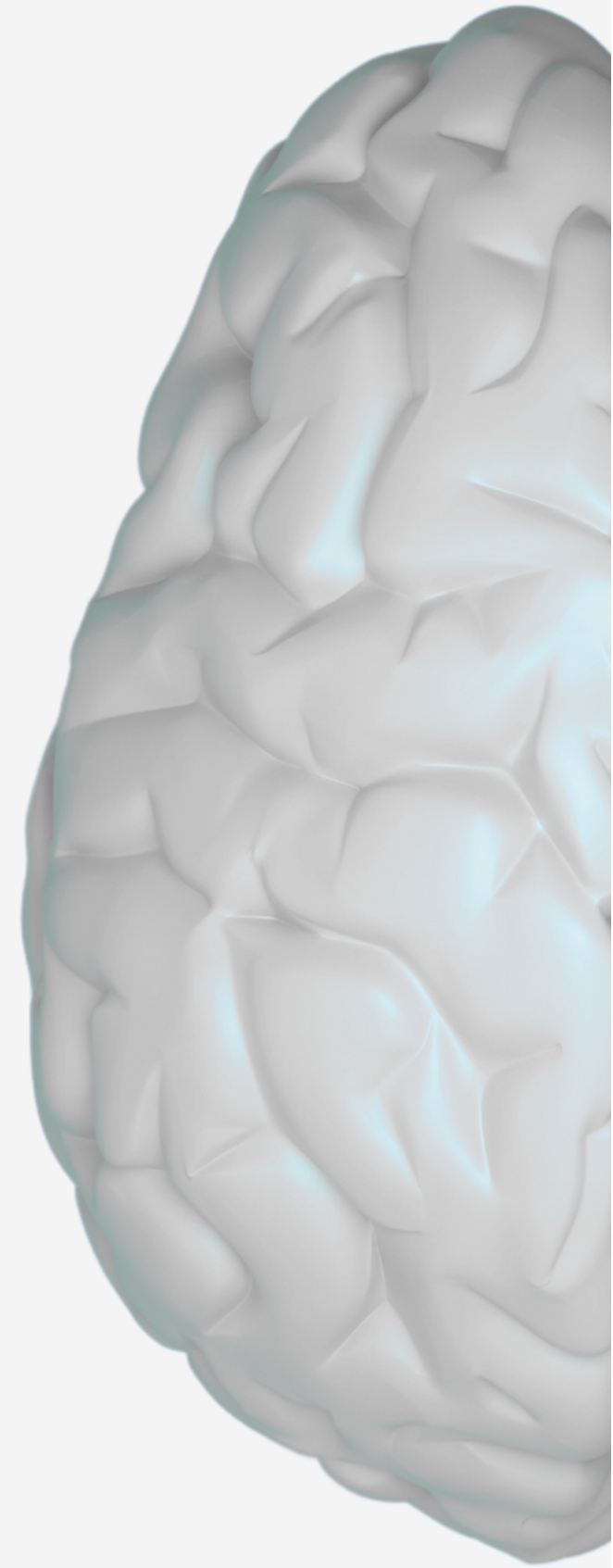
Tissue Restoration

3

Memory Consolidation
and Learning

BRAIN DETOX

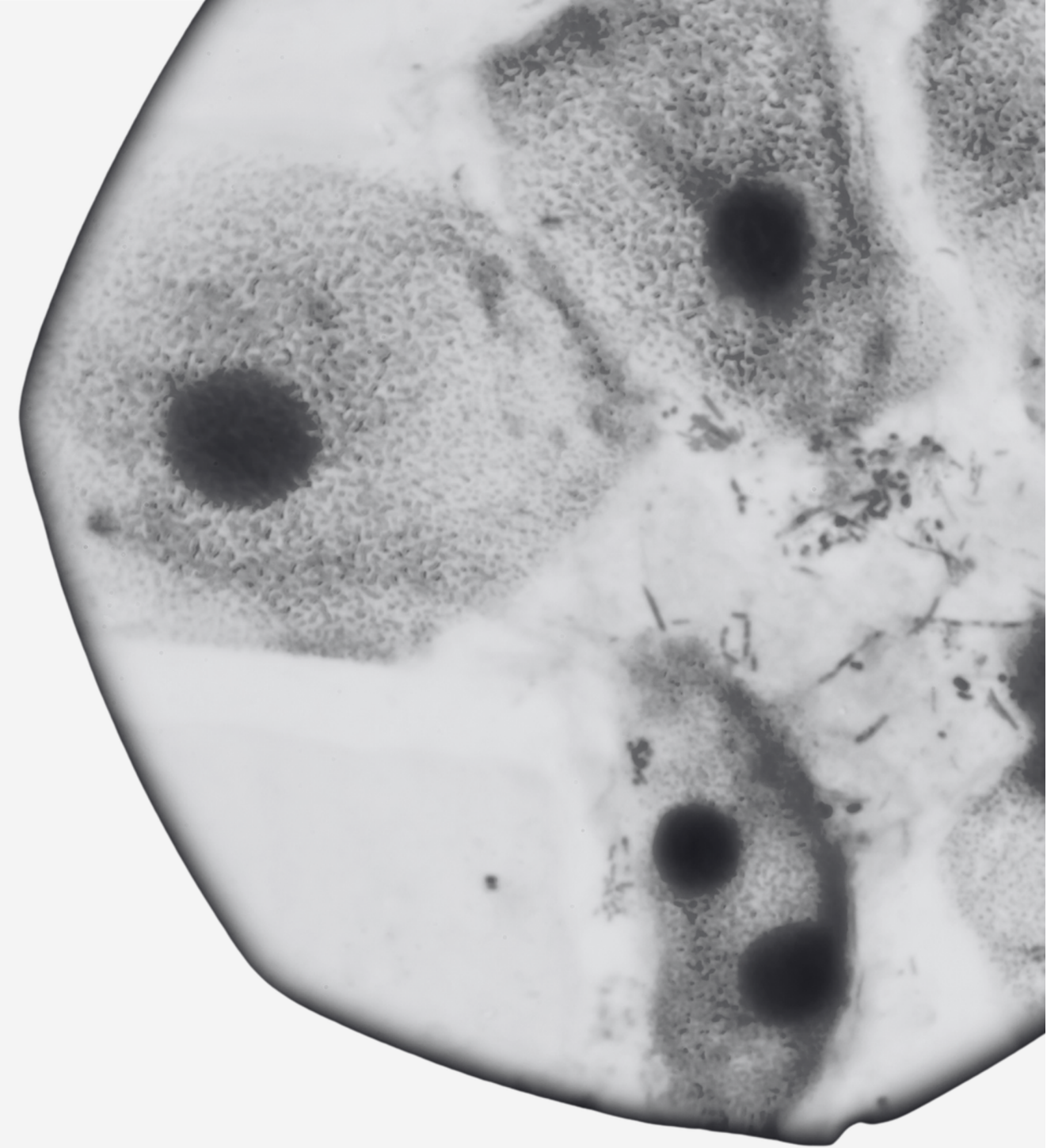
When we sleep, our brain detoxifies itself using the glymphatic system. This amazing system flushes out metabolic waste products that build up in our brains. Some of these waste products are even associated with Alzheimer's disease and dementia.



TISSUE RESTORATION

During deep sleep, our body tissue repairs itself. This process is only possible because of a special hormone released from the pituitary gland called growth hormone (GH).

Growth hormone is an anabolic (building) hormone that aids in muscle growth and bone building. Research indicates that sleep deprivation reduces GH release, which can dramatically affect your ability to recover from exercise and the stress of daily living.



MEMORY CONSOLIDATION AND LEARNING

The latest research demonstrates that consistent and fulfilling sleep is a critical component of learning and memory consolidation. When we sleep, our brain engages in a complex process that assembles what you learned during the day into a learned process or fact, and then cements that learning into long-term memory.

You can learn new skills, adopt difficult habits and change your behavior at any age. The caveat is, your brain **REQUIRES** sleep to make this happen.



3 SLEEP BEHAVIORS



Now that we've unpacked the three primary functions of sleep, let's discuss the three key sleep behaviors you should focus on to unlock the power of sleep.

How Long You Sleep

According to the **National Sleep Foundation**. Adults should aim for 7-9 hours of sleep each night. This is a hard and fast rule. And no, you probably aren't there a person with the special genetic polymorphism that enables you to thrive on just 5 hours per night. Consistently sleeping less than 7 and more than 9 hours each night is linked to a host of diseases.

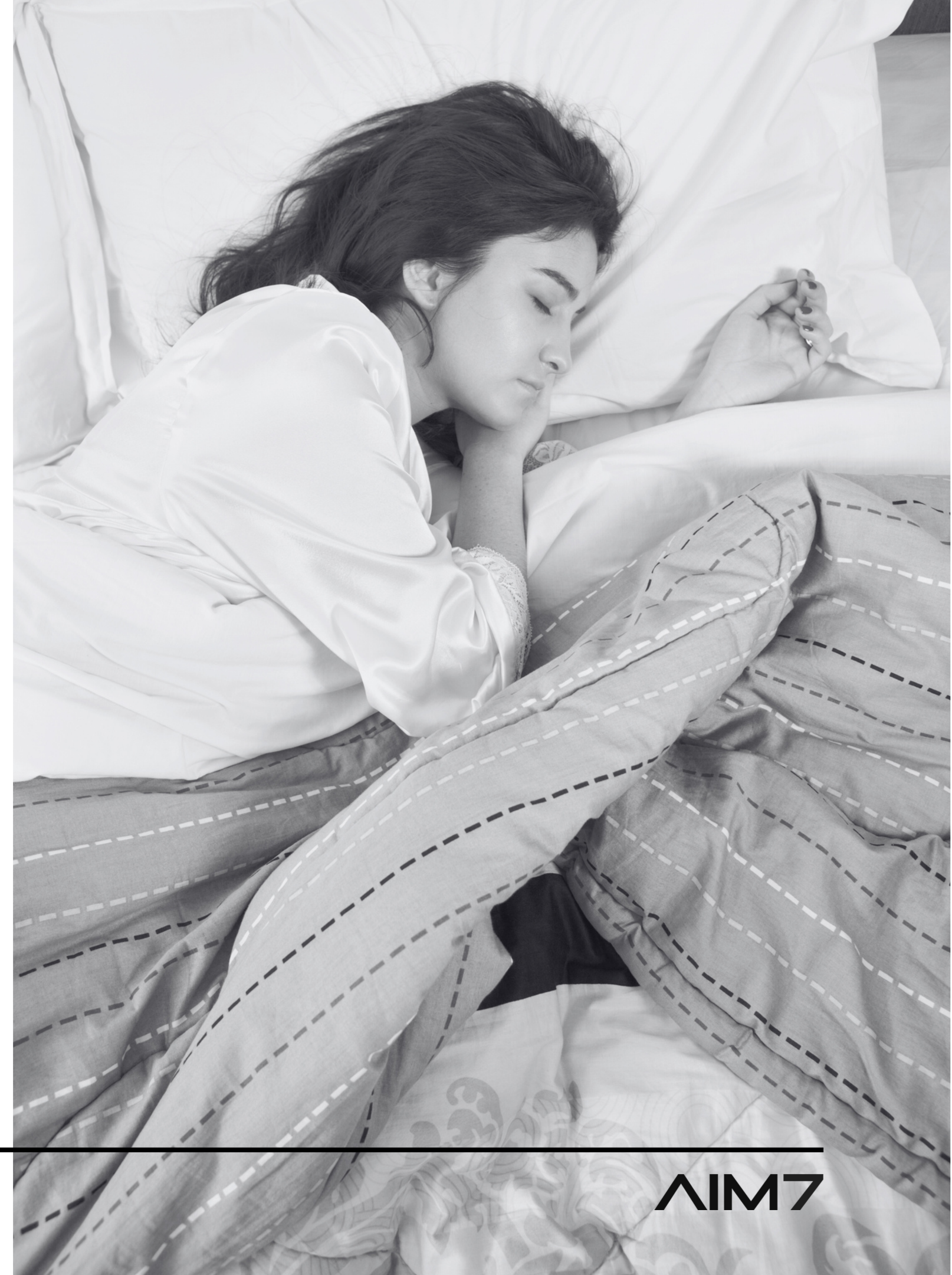
Sleep deprivation, sleeping less than 7 hours per night, is associated with an increased risk of obesity, diabetes, type 2 diabetes, and all-cause mortality. The deregulation of key hormones such as growth hormone, cortisol, melatonin, and our hunger hormones, leptin and ghrelin drives this.



Timing

Yes, when you go to bed matters. Sleeping from 10 pm to 6 am is NOT the same as sleeping from 1 am to 9 am. In addition, a robust study involving over 800,000 people in the UK Biobank found that going to bed earlier and waking up early by 1 hour can reduce the risk of major depression by 23%.

Shifting the midpoint of sleep 1 hour early decreased the risk of major depression by 23%, and another hour was about 40%. The most likely reason that sleep timing dramatically impacts mood is that early risers get more exposure to natural sunlight - more on that in a moment.



consistency

Your sleep schedule is crucial for maintaining your circadian rhythm. Inconsistent sleep schedules can lead to social jet lag, a condition where your body's internal clock and social schedule are misaligned.

Social jet lag can increase your risk for weight gain, depression, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and more. So find a sleep schedule you can follow during the week and on the weekends to prevent you from feeling like garbage on Monday.



CREATE THE CONDITIONS FOR RESTFUL AND FULFILLING SLEEP



Now that you know the three key sleep behaviors that dictate the effectiveness of sleep, let's transition into realistic daily actions you can take to make the transition to sleep smooth and easy.

Anchor Your Circadian Clock

Anchor Your Circadian Clock with Early Morning and Frequent Daytime Sun Exposure

Every day, we ascend and descend a continuum of alertness and calm—our relationship with light drives this process. When you view sunlight early in the morning, it kicks off a cascade of hormonal and neurological events that directly impacts your energy, mood, and ability to adapt to stress.

Light from the sun is our primary zeitgeber or time-giver, anchoring our circadian clock. This light exposure signals to the SCN that it's time to wake up and be alert by increasing cortisol and body temperature. It also impacts melatonin secretion, a hormone that regulates sleep.

Aim for at least 10 minutes of natural light exposure in the morning, even if it's cloudy. Also, take frequent breaks throughout the day to get natural light exposure. Your brain and body will thank you.

Unless you just ran a marathon and are totally worn out, you need to engage in a consistent pre-sleep routine to shift from a state of busyness to a state of relaxation. Here are a few things that you can do to quiet your mind and prepare for bed.

60-MINUTE COUNTDOWN

Start your pre-sleep routine about an hour before bedtime. This gives you plenty of time to prepare your mind and body to sleep.

DEEP BREATHING EXERCISES

Spend about 5-10 minutes performing deep belly breathing. Deep breathing exercises activate your parasympathetic nervous system, helping you move into a deep state of relaxation. A simple cadence you can use is:

- 4-second inhalation
- 1-second hold
- 8-second exhalation
- 1-second hold.

WARM SHOWER OR BATH

A warm shower or bath is not only relaxing, but it lowers your core body temperature, which can help you fall asleep faster.

sleep Environment

Make your room like a cave! Cold, dark, and quiet is the recipe for a great sleep environment. This means you'll have to turn over your cell phone and shut off the TV.

I recommend that you use blackout curtains or an eye mask to altogether avoid light while you sleep. Even small changes in ambient light can disturb your sleep patterns. Cold is critical when it comes to sleep.

Turn your A/C down about an hour before bedtime and set your thermostat between 60-67 degrees. Your body temperature naturally drops when you sleep, and a hormone called melatonin is released, which makes you sleepy. Keeping your room "comfortably cold" will help you fall asleep faster and stay asleep longer.

Finally, you want your bedroom to be quiet. If you live in a city, wear earplugs or use a white noise machine to keep the volume of noise consistent

THE PERFECT NAP

It's time to end the nap shaming. A brief 15 to 20-minute nap can be the difference between just making it and crushing the rest of your day. You don't even have to fall asleep. Research has demonstrated that naps improve your mood, reduce fatigue, and enhance your mental performance.

The keys to the perfect nap are to keep it short, take it early in the afternoon (preferably before 3 pm), and nap in a quiet space. If you want to supercharge your nap, drink 6-8 ounces of cold coffee right before you nap.

Caffeine affects a chemical called adenosine. Adenosine promotes sleep and makes you drowsy.

When you consume caffeine right before you nap, it competes with adenosine receptors in your brain, and you will wake up feeling revitalized and ready to go.

SUMMARY

Remember, sleep is required for you to grow, adapt, and thrive. Create a sleep routine that helps you transition from a mindset of “busyness” to one of rest and relaxation. Make your bedroom cold, dark, and quiet so that you can fall asleep fast and wake up rested and ready to perform at your best.



Dr. Erik Korem is a High Performance leader who teaches people to be their best without burning out. Erik has spent the past 15 years working as a Sports Scientist and High Performance Director in the NFL, and with collegiate and Olympic athletes. He holds a doctoral degree in Exercise Science with a research emphasis in the power of sleep.

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