Train in the morning or at night? [1]

Dear Alice,

I've been working out at night for a while now simply because it is the only time I have. Is it bad to lift and do my training at night? Also I've been feeling tired in the middle of the day, does that come from going to the gym late?

Answer

Dear Reader,

First off, it's great that you are working out, regardless of the time of day. You may notice that many fitness facilities on campus and in the community have responded to your need by staying open late or even 24 hours a day. From a physiological standpoint, working out at night is no different than working out during the day if that is what your schedule dictates. Just remember to hydrate before, during, and after your routine. It is also best to eat a little before you train - a piece of fruit or a granola bar will do the trick. If you find yourself hungry after your workout, your body may recover better with some sustenance as well. For tips on eating and working out, check out the Go Ask Alice! Nutrition & Physical Activity [2] archives.

When trying to determine which time of day is best for your workout, consider the following:

- Working out at night may disrupt sleep for some individuals. If you've noticed a change in your sleep habits, try to shift your workout earlier in the evening. If possible, avoid any "workout drink" that may be caffeinated or full of sugar.
- Though research is mixed and ever-evolving, some evidence shows that people who work out in the morning are better able to stick to their routine. However, if another time of day works well for you, keep it up and do what feels best.
- If you are exercising at night, whether in a park or other public space, or commuting between home and a fitness facility, pay extra attention to your safety and think about finding a workout partner (safety in numbers).

As far as feeling tired during the middle of the day, that may be related to not getting enough sleep at night. The recommended amount of sleep per night falls between 6 to 10 hours for most individuals. If your nighttime exercise routine is fairly new to you, it may take your body a little time to adjust. Most people who exercise consistently actually report experiencing more energy from their athletic endeavors. As mentioned above, nutrition and hydration have a big impact on our bodies, especially our energy levels. If your diet is deficient in any nutrients or high in sugars that can send your blood sugar (and energy levels) on a roller coaster, you may
want to consider how to balance your meals and snacks. Finally, you might find that squeezing in a 20 to 30 minute power nap during the day could help, not only to keep you refreshed, but to also allow for more energy while you train.

Congratulations on making the commitment to staying active. The countless benefits of exercise will help your mind, body, and soul. Keep up the good work, day or night!

Alice!
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