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How to Choose Between Hitting Snooze or Running



BY ASHLEY LAURETTA (/AUTHOR/ASHLEY-LAURETTA) • JULY 17, 2019

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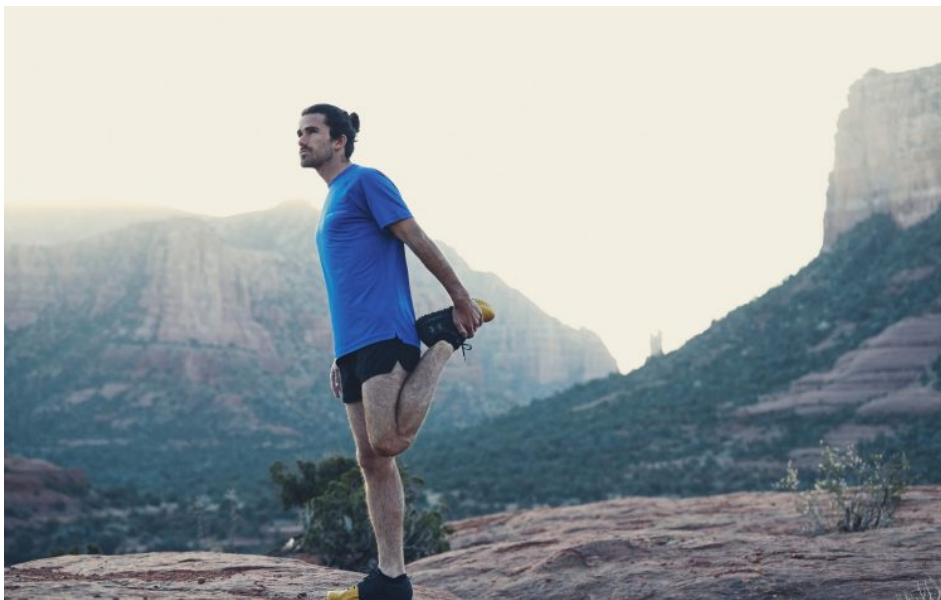
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Hitting the snooze button is definitely on the list of things that provides instant gratification. In the long term, however, that isn't always the case. As runners, we know there are going to be days when getting up to run before the sun rises is necessary. But is there ever a time you should give in to the desire to stay in bed? It can be argued that runners actually need a bit more sleep, in which case, is staying in bed warranted?

“It would be very fair to state that a runner or athlete requires more sleep than a so-called average person [who is sedentary or minimally active,]” explains Jeffrey I. Messer, PhD, faculty member of exercise physiology and chair of the **Exercise Science Department** (<https://www.mesacc.edu/departments/exercise-science>) at Mesa Community College in Mesa, Arizona. “More specifically, the dual goals of a) recovery from prior training and b) adapting to the aforementioned training in order to enhance health and/or fitness **necessitates additional sleep** (<https://blog.myfitnesspal.com/sleep-expert-dr-g-athletic-performance-sleep/>) for runners/athletes.”

So just how much sleep should you be getting, and is it ever OK to hit the snooze button in lieu of that looming long run? Here is your guide to when it’s actually OK to sleep in and when to make yourself get up and run.

HOW MUCH SLEEP DO RUNNERS NEED?

The common notion is you should be **logging eight hours of sleep per night** (<https://blog.myfitnesspal.com/healthy-habits-for-life-10-tips-for-better-sleep/>); however, you don’t need *quite* that much shut eye. The **official recommendation** (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4434546/>) for adults from both the American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) and Sleep Research Society (SRS) is to get seven hours or more. The upper limit of that is roughly nine hours, unless you are a young adult, recovering from sleep deficit or have an illness. The National Sleep Foundation (NSF) agrees with these recommendations, **citing** (<https://www.sleephealthjournal.org/article/S2352-72181500015-7/fulltext>) 7–9 hours as sufficient for young adults and adults, and 7–8 hours for older adults.

Of course, getting enough sleep is about more than just the duration. Though it is usually the focus, quality and regularity are also important factors of healthy sleep. This is where practicing **proper sleep hygiene** (<https://blog.myfitnesspal.com/7-tips-get-better-nights-sleep/>) comes into play. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) **notes that these sleep habits** (https://www.cdc.gov/sleep/about_sleep/sleep_hygiene.html) — including limiting daytime naps and a consistent sleep schedule — can improve your overall sleep health, which can reduce the probability of adverse health outcomes from sleeping less than 7 hours per night (as outlined in the AASM and SRS joint statement).

It deserves specific mention that one of the improvements to sleep hygiene recommended by the CDC is, in fact, exercise. **One paper** (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4341978/>), published in the American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine, specifically notes that not only is exercise beneficial for sleep, but poor sleep is actually a deterrent for physical activity. This “bidirectional relationship,” as it is called, helps illustrate that adequate sleep is just as important for exercise as exercise is for sleep. Keep this in mind when your alarm goes off and you are going to hit the snooze button.

WHY HITTING SNOOZE IS A NO-NO

When it comes to hitting snooze or getting in that run the answer is actually simple: Don't hit snooze. It's a clear-cut solution because you actually shouldn't hit the snooze button, anyway. The Cleveland Clinic **notes** (<https://newsroom.clevelandclinic.org/2019/03/08/is-hitting-the-snooze-button-bad-for-your-health/>) that snoozing actually has a negative effect on restorative sleep because parts of the sleep cycle are interrupted by the practice. Also, the five extra minutes (or more that happen sporadically as you continue to snooze) don't actually provide any benefit.

Michael Breus, PhD, a diplomat of the American Board of Sleep Medicine and a fellow of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, agrees the snooze button should be off limits. Instead, you should plan your bedtime routine around when you need to get up. By increasing the chance of being well-rested, you'll eliminate the need for the snooze button altogether. If you're unsure of what time you should be going to bed, Breus created a **sleep calculator** (<https://thesleepdoctor.com/how-to-sleep-better/sleep-calculator/>) to help you find your ideal bedtime (meaning lights out and actively trying to sleep).

If you are practicing healthy sleep habits, including going to bed at the correct time — consistently versus sporadically — you should notice a benefit to your overall health. **Studies have found** (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24260280>) snoozing causes measured cognitive impairment, so eliminating it as an option is really the best choice.

WHEN TO CHOOSE SLEEP OVER RUNNING (AND VICE VERSA)

This doesn't mean you should always prioritize exercise over sleep; it does mean it should be done intentionally instead of fleeting presses of the snooze button. Messer encourages logging extra hours of sleep if there is a specific rationale behind it.

"If, for example, [you have] just completed a demanding series of professional/work obligations that extend across multiple days and/or weeks," he notes, "[a runner] might derive greater health benefit from accumulating immediate sleep and correspondingly postponing a planned training session until all relevant variables such as sleep, hydration, energy intake, etc. have been fully, adequately addressed."

If you are just hitting snooze or are only staying in bed because of the immediate sense of comfort, Messer says this is when you probably should just get up and run. Not only will you get physiological benefits from exercise, he adds that you'll get psychological benefits as well, thanks to the discipline it takes to get up and run even when you'd rather stay under the covers.

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