

SLEEP

REST

NEWSTART

Sleep Isn't Wasted Time. *It's Maintenance.*

How the brain's overnight cleanup shift protects your heart, mind, and mood, and how to actually get it.

GUIDE

In this guide

A walk through the science of sleep, what happens while you're unconscious, and the lifestyle response the Original Plan teaches.

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PART ONE

The Problem

THE REFRAME

What you've been told:

"Sleep is downtime, an off switch you can shorten without cost."

What's actually true:

Sleep is an active maintenance shift. The brain does some of its most important repair work while you're unconscious, and skipping it doesn't save time, it just moves the cost downstream.

THE NUMBERS

Sleep, by the data

1 in 3

U.S. adults get less than
7 hours of sleep a night

CDC / NCHS, 2024

20%

higher heart attack risk
for adults sleeping under
6 hours a night

*Journal of the American College of
Cardiology*

5.4x

the crash rate for drivers
on 4-5 hours of sleep vs.
7 or more

AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety

\$109B

annual U.S. cost of
fatigue-related crashes

NHTSA

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PART TWO

The Science

THE SCIENCE

The Glymphatic System

Think of it as a nightly power wash. During deep, slow-wave sleep, the space between brain cells expands and cerebrospinal fluid moves through it, carrying out the byproducts of a day of thinking. Skip that stage night after night and the cleanup falls behind.

Astrocytes

Glial cells that line the brain's fluid channels

Aquaporin-4 channels

Open wider during deep sleep, widening the flow path

Cerebrospinal fluid

Flushes through brain tissue, collecting waste

Beta-amyloid & tau

Metabolic waste proteins carried out with the fluid

THE SCIENCE

Cortisol & the Body's Clock

Cut sleep short and the rhythm flattens. Cortisol stays elevated instead of resting, and inflammation that should resolve overnight keeps running instead, which is part of why a single bad night leaves you foggy and a pattern of them adds up to real risk.

Cortisol

Should dip at night and rise gently before waking

HPA axis

The same stress-hormone loop that runs the body's alarm system

Inflammatory markers

Rise measurably after even one short night

Chronic short sleep

Linked to higher blood pressure, weight gain, and diabetes risk

“In vain you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep.”

PSALM 127:2, ESV

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PART THREE

The Original Plan's Answer

PRACTICAL STEPS

Three ways to protect the shift

1

Set one wake time, seven days a week

A fixed wake time anchors the whole 24-hour rhythm, weekends included.

2

Get outside within an hour of waking

Morning light sets the clock that tells your body when to release melatonin that night.

3

Protect the hour before midnight

Sleep logged before midnight appears to do more restorative work than the same hours after it.

A NATURAL REMEDY

None of this requires a prescription.

The nervous system responds to ordinary, repeatable inputs, the same ones the body was designed to wind down on.

Evening walk after dinner

Lowers core body temperature, which helps trigger melatonin release.

Magnesium-rich foods

Leafy greens, almonds, and pumpkin seeds support nervous-system wind-down.

A dark, cool room

65 to 68°F, screens off after sunset, supports deeper slow-wave sleep.

“I know from the testimonies given me from time to time for brain workers, that sleep is worth far more before than after midnight. Two hours’ good sleep before twelve o’clock is worth more than four hours after twelve o’clock.”

ELLEN G. WHITE, MANUSCRIPT RELEASES, VOL. 7, P. 224

THE TAKEAWAY

Sleep was never the reward for finishing everything else.

It's the maintenance that makes tomorrow possible.

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