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I Tried Working Out Every Single Morning for a Month, and Here's What Happened

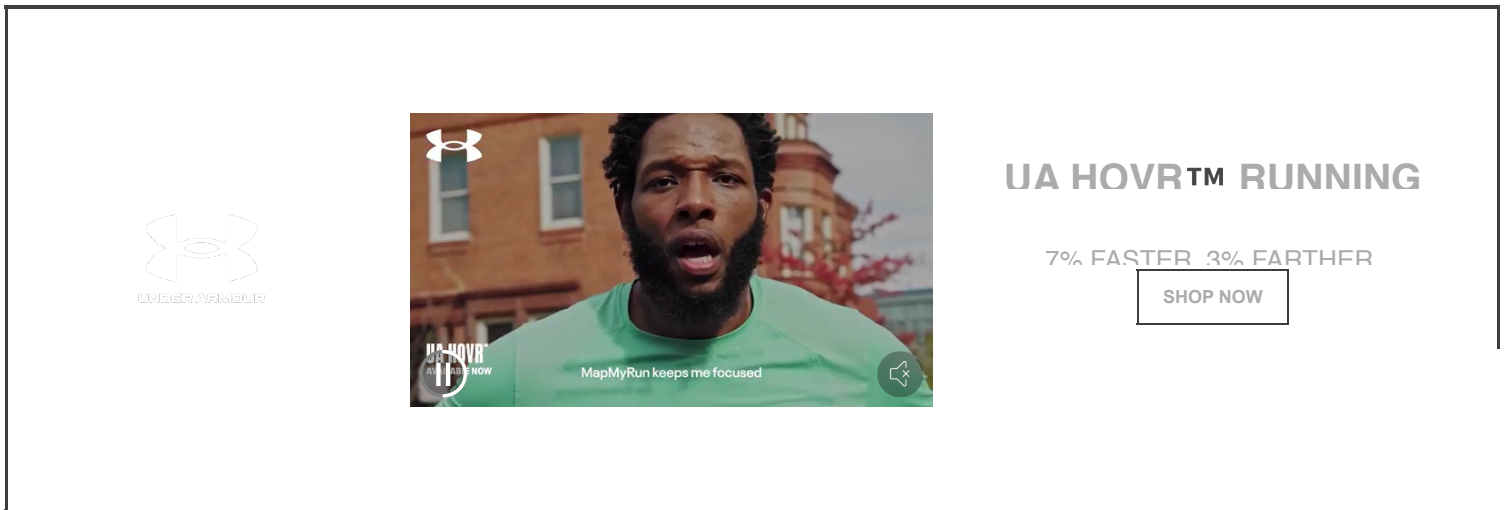
Not a morning person? Find out why the benefits outweigh the costs.

BY [JUDY KOUTSKY](#) JUN 26, 2017



Before I had kids, I would use my lunch hour to hit the gym. I had a “passport” membership to a gym chain and could go to any of their locations. Lucky for me, there were several near my office, so I would scan their lunchtime class schedules and take advantage of [total-body conditioning](#) and kickboxing. My midday break always got my endorphins going, and I was extremely dedicated to taking it. As a friend said, I had the sculpted arms to show for it. (Get stronger, faster, and stay on the road with the [New IronStrength Workout](#) from *Runner's World*.)

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Then I went freelance and had two kids. Suddenly lunchtime workouts didn't seem doable, and my arms (along with the rest of my body) suffered from their new (lack of) routine. I tried working out in the evenings after the kids were in bed, but I was so tired by then that it was hard to stick with it.

But I finally got to a point where I was more tired of not working out and not feeling fit, and I knew something had to change. So I decided to make a commitment to work out every single morning for a month. No excuses.

Why in the morning?



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“Exercise in the morning helps to get your metabolism going, burning more calories throughout the day,” says [David Geier, MD](#), an orthopedic surgeon and sports medicine specialist in Charleston, SC, and author of [That’s Gotta Hurt: The Injuries That Changed Sports Forever](#). It also ensures that you’ll actually fit in your sweat session. “Often in the course of a busy day, events come up that end up squeezing out your workout time,” Geier says. He explains that consistently working out in the morning makes it a habit, probably more so than trying to fit in exercise at different times every day.

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Getting motivated

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Here’s the thing about exercise: We are all super busy and there are always other things we could be doing, so unless you make exercise a priority—say, put it on the calendar like a meeting—then it won’t happen. I decided to treat my morning workouts like a work assignment. (There’s something to this.

Scheduling everything, even family time, is one of [these 7 habits of superproductive people.](#))

As a freelancer, I sometimes go into different offices for project work, two or three days a week, and sometimes I work at home. On the days I went into an office, I booked a morning sitter to deal with the kids (get them up, dressed, fed, and to school), so I could hit the gym before work. Some people would think this was crazy. Why would I pay \$40 to a sitter for 2 hours (\$20 an hour is the going rate in my town) in order to hit the gym? But for me, it's totally worth it. First, mornings are a mess in our house—the kids don't want to get up or get dressed, so it's like pulling teeth to get them to eat their breakfast and be at school on time—so outsourcing those 2 hours was a wonderful gift to myself. Second, I've always been an early-morning person, so getting up at 5:30 or 6 AM isn't difficult for me. I feel my best in the morning, and a gym workout only enhances that feeling.

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The days I worked from home, it was harder to justify paying a sitter to take my kids in the morning, so instead, I worked out while my husband and kids were still sleeping. Our gym opens at 5:30 AM, and my family rarely gets up before 6:30 or 7, so I would set the alarm, throw on my workout clothes, and sneak out the door. Often, I'd get back before anyone got up, or I would walk in just as they were awakening.

Here are ten moves to strengthen any runner.

Feeling good

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Someone once told me that working out first thing in the morning was like walking around with a secret, and that's exactly how I felt. No matter how crappy the day was (I didn't get an assignment I was hoping for, or the kids were being particularly challenging), there was always that silver lining: I started the day by working out. And it turns out experts agree with me.

“The benefits of exercising in the morning include feeling accomplished and good about yourself because you were actually able to make this happen,” says Yvonne Thomas, PhD, a Los Angeles–based psychologist who specializes in self-esteem. “Other benefits of exercising in the morning are that you can be more dynamic—physically, cognitively, and emotionally.”

Things that would normally raise my blood pressure (a work deadline got moved up, my kids lost their library books) seemed more manageable. I felt like I was better able to put things in perspective, perhaps due to my more positive outlook. (Try these [9 morning exercises to start your day stress-free.](#)) Thomas notes that by starting the day with exercise, you're more focused and balanced. "Exercising in the beginning of the day can help decrease some negative feelings and thoughts that can get in your way as the day goes on, making you feel less depressed, anxious, stressed, overwhelmed, sad, or angry."

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Sleeping better



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It really is true: Working out makes you sleep like a baby. (These [20 tips to sleep better every night](#) help, too.) In fact, [a recent study](#) even showed that working out at 7 AM was better for your sleep than working out at 7 PM, or at 1 PM for that matter. Why?

"We don't yet know the physiological mechanisms that result in these changes, but we do know enough

to say if you need to decrease your blood pressure and if you need to increase your quality of sleep, 7 AM is probably the best time to exercise,” says the study’s lead researcher Scott Collier, PhD, assistant professor in the department of health, leisure, and exercise science in the College of Health Sciences at Appalachian State University.

During the month of my morning exercise experiment, I slept beautifully. I was in bed by 9 PM (at the latest), and my mind somehow knew it was time to shut down for the day—it didn’t race or constantly add things to my to-do list like normal. I was generally out as soon as I pulled up the covers. And I needed to be, in order to make my 5:30 wake-up call. (Want to become a morning runner? [Here’s how you can do it.](#))

The result

I’m happy to say I never missed a morning workout during my experiment, though I did listen to my body and go easier on the days I needed it. I just knew that if I skipped a day I’d fall off the wagon, though I know doctors recommend rest days every now and then to let your muscles recover ([here are 6 times you really shouldn’t workout](#)). Since the month ended, I’ve kept up my new early morning routine. The benefits were just too good to go back—plus, I lost 4 pounds. Not too shabby.

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The article [I Tried Working Out Every Single Morning For A Month, And Here's What Happened](#) originally appeared on [Prevention](#).

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JUDY KOUTSKY

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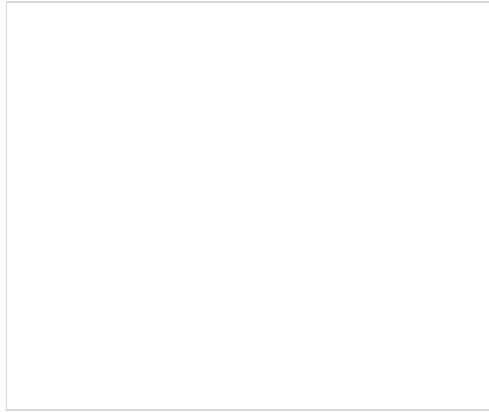
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