

10 Sleep Aids to Help You Maximize Fitness Performance

Do you want to be a better athlete (or a fitter parent)? You need to prioritize sleep.

Do you want to sleep better? You need to prioritize exercise.

When it comes to healthy habits (physical exercise, cognitive exercise, nutrition and sleep), each healthy habit tends to work in conjunction with the other habits to enhance overall performance and well-being. That's why sleep is so important when it comes to physical performance, and physical performance is so important when it comes to quality sleep.

In other words, both sleep *and* exercise should rank as top priorities, especially if you're an active individual.

But, if you're really overloaded, struggling to prioritize both habits, Dr. Rosenberg, a Board Certified Sleep Medicine Specialist and author of *Sleep Soundly Every Night, Feel Fantastic Every Day*, suggests focusing on sleep first. It's no secret that after a good night's sleep, everything feels easier and more manageable, making it more likely you'll have the energy to lace up your shoes and work up a sweat.

If a sound night's sleep seems impossible, though, check out these science-backed sleep aids to help you get started. Who knows? Eight hours of great sleep tonight could make you better, faster and stronger tomorrow.

Lavender Essential Oil

Dr. Gabrielle Francis, a Naturopathic Doctor, Chiropractor, Acupuncturist and Licensed Massage Therapist swears by the benefits of lavender oil to help stimulate sleep.

"Essential oils work because of their pharmacological effects on your physiology, and because of their olfactory effects on the limbic system of your brain. Lavender is great for insomnia, and there are four ways to use it for results:



1. Diffuse 1 to 2 drops in the air with a diffuser
2. Inhale directly from a cloth or bottle
3. Add several drops to bath water
4. Apply 1 to 2 drops topically, either directly under your nose, or 3 to 5 drops to a carrier oil, like almond oil."

You can pick up high-quality lavender essential oil from the healthy living section of your local grocery store.

Epsom Salt Bath



Dr. Francis also suggests Epsom salt baths, due in part to their high levels of magnesium, "Nightly Epsom salt baths just before bed will help you calm down before sleep. High in magnesium and other minerals, they relax muscles and calm the mind. Soak 20 minutes in warm water mixed with two cups of salts."

Consider picking up lavender-scented Epsom salts, like Dr. Teal's Sleep Epsom Salt Soaking Solution (\$5) for a triple-whammy of slumber-inducing benefits: warm bath, lavender scent and topical magnesium.