Re:set

Did **you know** about?

SLEEP OR WORK OUT?

Should you get an extra hour of sleep or a workout

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You're lying in bed, trying to decide what time to set your alarm for tomorrow. You could get a full seven hours of sleep if you wake up at your normal time, or you could wake up an hour and a half earlier to make that morning spin class. Which should you choose?

This seemingly simple riddle is one we've all faced at some point. The decision seems impossible. Sleep is essential for a healthy immune system and injury-prevention, but exercise can contribute to better, sounder sleep.

Prioritise sleep

Sleep and exercise are both incredibly important for your body, but if you have to choose one it has to be sleep. Adequate amounts of sleep get your body the time it needs to replenish and refresh your cellular functioning.
If you do not get to do that, your health will suffer greatly.

Most experts agree that when forced to choose, they'd almost always choose sleep. Adults need 7–9 hours of sleep, according to the National Sleep Foundation, for optimal performance, memory retention and good health. Achieving a sound night's sleep is largely dependent on your commitment to your body's circadian rhythm, which is when we normally go to bed and wake up.

A North-western study showed our muscles also follow that circadian cycle, meaning if you're working out during the time when you're normally asleep, your muscle repair will be less efficient.

Exercise is important, too

But just because sleep is usually the answer doesn't mean you should discount the need for exercise for your overall health if you're always crunched for time. Exercise changes the brain and is critical for brain health. What's good for your body is good for your brain, too. Through exercise, you are feeding your brain by increasing blood and oxygen flow.

When you have to choose, remember a short workout is better than no workout at all. If you have only 10 minutes, do a quick workout at home with simple exercises like squats, jumping jacks and planks. There are also lots of apps that can give you a quick workout for a specific time frame using only your bodyweight.

Be honest with yourself

If you find yourself constantly short on time, it might also be good to see where that time is actually going. Try tracking your days meticulously for a week to see where you might be wasting time. Almost everyone is guilty of too much time on social media or watching TV, so see if you could substitute that time for working out. This will help you get a proper night's sleep and a workout.