



Why Sleep is Critical For Runners

by [Molly Hurford](#)

As runners, we often get so busy balancing life with training that [sleep](#) falls to the wayside. But new research shows getting enough sleep can be key to helping us fend off nasty infections. On the flip side, too much stress and not enough sleep can make us even more susceptible to getting sick.

A [new study](#) from the University of Tübingen showed sleep improves the ability of some of our immune cells to work better, helping us kill off viruses before they turn into full blown illnesses. Simply put, as we sleep, our bodies become more efficient at cleaning house. And stressing out actually makes those same immune cells work less.

Currently, up to 45% of Americans [reported](#) poor or insufficient sleep affecting their daily activities at least once in the past seven days, and most are getting less than seven hours of sleep per night.

If you're one of the many people not getting 7–9 hours of sleep every night, here's some key advice to consider to up your sleep and your immunity:

PRIORITIZE ZZZ'S

Unfortunately, unless you're an elite runner, life is likely going to get in the way of that delicate [balance between enough training and enough sleep](#). If you're not getting to that 7-hour mark, though, your training is likely doing more harm than good. Consider swapping longer runs for shorter, faster sessions to maximize your time spent running while freeing up a [couple extra hours for sleep](#) at night.

FIND YOUR WORKOUT RHYTHM

If you have trouble sleeping when you run in the evening, consider going to bed earlier and waking up earlier to run in the morning. The schedule shift might take awhile to adjust to, but it will be worth it for better quality sleep.

TURN YOUR PHONE OFF BEFORE BED

After dinner, try to limit screen time as much as possible and invest in blue-light blocking glasses or an app like Flux that removes some of your screen's blue light to help your eyes and brain prep for sleep. If possible, leave your phone outside the bedroom and set an old-school alarm clock so you're not tempted to [scroll Instagram](#) at midnight.

KEEP YOUR ROOM COOL AND DARK

The National Sleep Foundation (NSF) recommends keeping your room cool — between 60–67 degrees — and completely dark. Get blackout blinds and turn down the thermostat before you hit the sheets, and your sleep will be deeper. (According to the NSF, it can help to “think of your bedroom as a cave — it should be quiet, cool and dark for the best chance at getting enough rest.”)



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OPTIMIZE YOUR SLEEP TIME

[Make your sleeping time even more efficient](#) by getting pajamas that actually help your body recover faster. Under Armour's [Athlete Recovery Sleepwear](#) works to return infrared energy to your body, which boosts localized blood flow and increases the amount of oxygen reaching your muscles to restore your muscles faster.

CHECK IN ON SLEEP QUALITY AND HOURS

Use a wearable to track your sleep and assess how much restful, useful sleep you're getting versus hours spent tossing and turning. Often, the data is surprising — and can help you see patterns, like restless sleep on nights when you have that second glass of wine or deep sleep when you sipped chamomile tea and [read a book](#) before going to bed.