

Start Smart!

A simple strategy to properly prepare yourself for the day ahead

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1. Take a moment

Instead of pressing the snooze button until the very last second before you have to force yourself out of bed, lie awake for 5 minutes and contemplate your day ahead. Point and flex your toes, squeeze the muscles in one leg then the other. Turn your head to one side then the other and drop your chin to your chest and imagine looking at your toes. Mentally run through the things you need to do as your day progresses. Preparing yourself this way for a couple of minutes, rather than stumbling out of bed with eyes still closed, augurs well for the day ahead.

2. Stretch

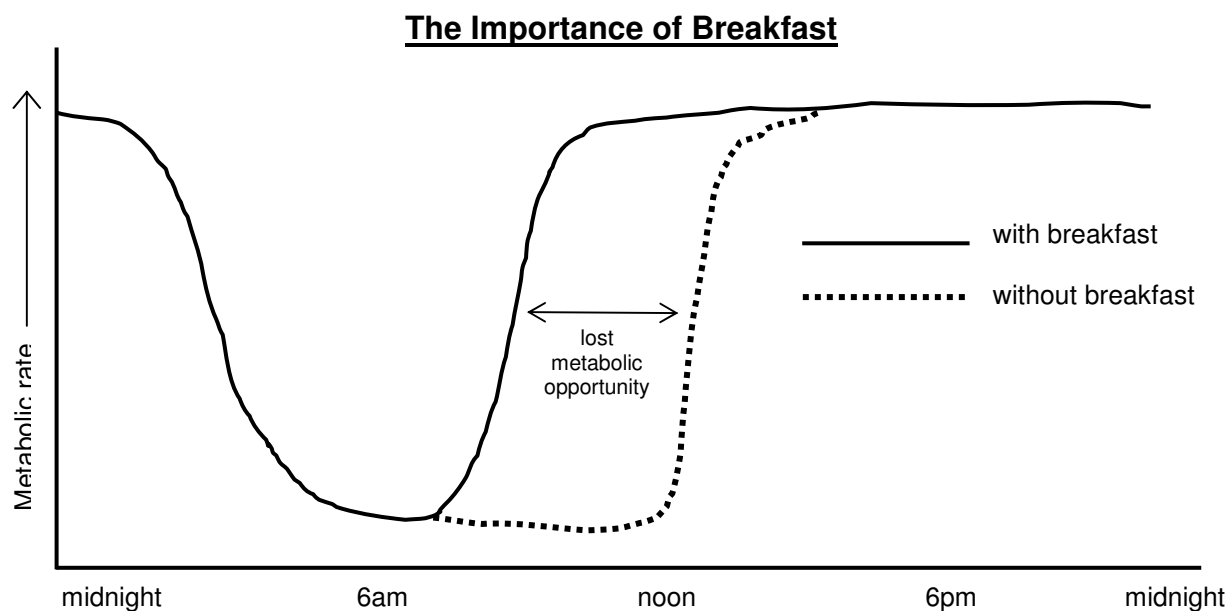
When you get out of bed in the morning your muscles are naturally warm and you are dressed in some of your comfiest clothes; this is a great time to stretch!

Here are 5 of my favorite stretches to maintain flexibility in your back, legs and upper body.

- Lying flat on your back, hug in one knee to your chest and alternate pointing and flexing your toes. Hold your knee and support your leg as you drop it to the side away from your midline. Bring it back to the center and switch hands, giving an extra pull across the body and slightly up toward the shoulder. Repeat with the other leg.
- Lying on your back with your knee bent in to the chest, extend your leg into the air and using a t-shirt or towel for example, loop it over your foot and use it to gently pull your leg toward your face. If your lower back rises from the floor, bend the non-working leg slightly. Repeat on the other side. Lift the torso for extra effort.
- Lie face down on the floor and bend your leg at the knee. Lift your thigh up off the floor slightly and grab your ankle (not your foot). Enhance the stretch by gently pulling your heel toward your buttock. Repeat with the other leg.
- Child's Pose: Begin lying face down with your hands flat on the floor next to your chest. Push up with the arms, first onto all fours, then push the hips back until your bottom is flat against your heels, arms stretched forward. Reach as far forward as you can with your fingers.
- Upward/Downward Facing Dog (advanced): Lying face down, place your hands flat on the floor close to your waist and touching the ribcage. Push your upper body up off the floor and tilt the head slightly back to flex the spine. Tuck under your toes and raise your thighs slightly off the floor. Tuck your chin into your chest and push through the arms, raising up your hips so that your body forms an upside-down 'V'. Try to press your heels to the floor. Step or jump to a crouch position and slowly raise your body to stand.

3. Eat breakfast

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day; it should also be the second highest in calories (lunch 1st). Skipping breakfast robs your body of the crucial first metabolism boost of the day. Think of your body after a good night's sleep as a fire with glowing embers. Not much (heat) energy is released from the fire unless you stoke it with added fuel; this is the role your breakfast plays in the system. Very few calories are burned when your body is metabolizing at its lowest rate – this is the energy conservation period when your cells have slowed their chemical processes to a maintenance level during sleep. Going without food until lunchtime has wasted 3 or 4 hours of high intensity calorie-burning. This is often the number one mistake made by individuals who are finding it difficult to shed pounds.



Breakfast should always contain three important nutritional components:

- Good quality protein (ham, bacon and sausage don't qualify)
 - egg whites
 - nuts or peanut butter
 - yogurt
 - fish
 - fat free dairy
- 1 tbs good fat
 - olive or canola oil
 - peanut butter
- Complex carbohydrates
 - whole grain cereal/oatmeal (no added sugar)
 - fruits (brightly colored)
 - whole grain bread
 - vegetables