**What time for exercise?**

Most of us are simply busy all the time and as I’ve said and continue to say, you’ve got to prioritize your schedule by putting you and your personal health on top of that list and find time to take care of yourself, first.

It’s been a while since I’ve looked into the topic ‘when is the best time of the day to exercise?’ I know that this topic alone is one of the biggest and often the only excuse people have for not exercising for their own, personal health. They don’t have time.

Several years ago, I’m remembering research that indicated the best time of day to exercise was early afternoon. That’s the time of day when we get those after lunch, afternoon slugs and our energy is lowest. Exercising at this time of day fuels energy, burns those lunchtime calories, increases your metabolism back up so that it’s ready to drop you into a deep sleep when bedtime rolls around later.

Realistically that makes the best sense, except when you factor in that most of us fall into the working class and afternoons just aren’t an option for a workout. So, then the second-best time of day that the research supported; ‘any time of the day that you can get it in.’

Recent research out of Brown Alpert Medical School, in an article published in the International Business Times, 7/8/19 (Mathew, I). Suggests that the time of day that an individual chooses to exercise, and the level of physical activity do play an important role in weight loss.

This research studied 375 adults who were involved in various exercise programs ranging from moderate to vigorous in intensity. The study looked at these individuals for their ability to maintain their weight loss and asked them to report their frequency of exercise and the time of day that they exercised.

The study found that those who exercised in the morning experienced significant weight loss. It also found that those with higher physical activity levels were associated with consistent exercise regardless of the time of day that the individual exercised.

Exercising in the morning seems to be the time when individuals are most successful and able to stay consistent with their exercise. Which makes a lot of sense! Get up early (which can be an excuse of its own) and get it done before your busy days begin.

It’s a special individual who works out at higher intensity levels to begin with. So, when the research said that ‘higher physical activity levels were associated with consistent exercise regardless of the time of day,’ this doesn’t surprise me. Individuals who really love to exercise will get it in, no matter when it gets done.

Leah Schumacher, the lead author of the research out of Brown, indicates that they want to do more research to determine whether there is a specific time of day that is more advantageous for individuals who have initial low physical activity level to develop a physical activity habit.

Another study coming out of the Department of Biomolecular Sciences at the Weizmann Institute of Science wanted to find out whether there is a connection between the time of day, our circadian cycles and exercise performance.

“Circadian rhythms dominate everything we do. Previous studies suggest that at least 50% of our metabolism is circadian and 50% of the metabolites in our body oscillate based on the circadian cycle. It makes sense that exercise would one of the things that’s impacted.,” said Paolo Sasson-Corsi, senior author of another paper from the Center for Epigenetics and Metabolism at the University of California, Irvine.

They found a protein called hypoxia-inducible factor 1-alpha (HIF-1) is activated by exercise in different ways depending on the time of day. Exercise seemed to have the most beneficial effect on metabolism at the beginning of the active phase (equivalent to late morning in humans) compared with the resting phase (evening).

Again, even these researchers conclude that, “you may be a morning person, or you may be a night person, and those things need to be taken into account,” when strategizing for a consistent exercise program.