

# How To Wake Up Feeling Refreshed

“How you wake up each day is very much under your own control, based on how you structure your life and your sleep.” – Professor Matthew Walker

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Waking up feeling refreshed in the morning is down to three key factors: sleep, exercise and what you eat for breakfast.

The findings should help those who feel groggy in the mornings and who find it hard to get going without coffee.

The research on over 833 people tracked them over a two-week period to see what they did during the day, when they slept and rose and what they had for breakfast.

The results showed that to increase the chances of waking up alert, people should:

- get substantial exercise the day before,
- sleep longer and later into the morning
- and eat a breakfast high in complex carbohydrates and low in sugar.

Dr Raphael Vallat, the study's first author, said:

“All of these have a unique and independent effect.

If you sleep longer or later, you're going to see an increase in your alertness.

If you do more [physical activity](#) on the day before, you're going to see an increase. You can see improvements with each and every one of these factors.”

## 1. The right breakfast

The best breakfast for feeling alert in the morning, the researchers found, contained high amounts of carbohydrates and only a relatively small amount of protein.

The worst breakfast contained high levels of simple sugars — this made people feel sleepy.

Dr Vallat said:

“A breakfast rich in carbohydrates can increase alertness, so long as your body is healthy and capable of efficiently disposing of the glucose from that meal, preventing a sustained spike in blood sugar that otherwise blunts your brain’s alertness.

We have known for some time that a diet high in sugar is harmful to sleep, not to mention being toxic for the cells in your brain and body.

However, what we have discovered is that, beyond these harmful effects on sleep, consuming high amounts of sugar in your breakfast, and having a spike in blood sugar following any type of breakfast meal, markedly blunts your brain’s ability to return to waking consciousness following sleep.”

## 2. The right sleep

More sleep helps rid the body of adenosine, a chemical that builds up in the body during the day.

It is the action of adenosine that is blocked by caffeine, which is one of the reasons coffee makes us feel more alert.

Professor Matthew Walker, study co-author, said:

“Considering that the majority of individuals in society are not getting enough sleep during the week, sleeping longer on a given day can help clear some of the adenosine sleepiness debt they are carrying.

In addition, sleeping later can help with alertness for a second reason.

When you wake up later, you are rising at a higher point on the upswing of your 24-hour circadian rhythm, which ramps up throughout the morning and boosts alertness.”

## 3. The exercise question

Exactly why exercise the day before makes people feel alert the next day is not yet clear.

It could be because people sleep better after exercise, said Dr Vallat:

“It may be that exercise-induced better sleep is part of the reason exercise the day before, by helping sleep that night, leads to superior alertness throughout the next day.”

## All in the genes?

The study also looked at the effect of genetics on morning alertness by including identical twins.

Could it be that some of us are destined to feel groggy in the morning whatever our lifestyle?

Professor Walker thinks not as genes only explained 25 percent of the differences in morning grogginess between people:

“We know there are people who always seem to be bright-eyed and bushy-tailed when they first wake up.

But if you’re not like that, you tend to think, ‘Well, I guess it’s just my genetic fate that I’m slow to wake up.

There’s really nothing I can do about it, short of using the stimulant chemical caffeine, which can harm sleep.

But our new findings offer a different and more optimistic message.

How you wake up each day is very much under your own control, based on how you structure your life and your sleep.

You don’t need to feel resigned to any fate, throwing your hands up in disappointment because, ‘... it’s my genes, and I can’t change my genes.’

There are some very basic and achievable things you can start doing today, and tonight, to change how you awake each morning, feeling alert and free of that grogginess.”