

Should You Shower in the Morning, or at Night? Yes.

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A morning shower can help you wake up. But showering at night can help sleep arrive faster. What to do? Credit Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

By [Maya Salam](#)

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There were few greater sins in my childhood home than going to bed dirty, though I could sometimes appease my mother by just washing my feet before slipping between the clean sheets. Now, as an adult, I cannot bear to get in bed with the grime of the day clinging to

my skin. And I'm not alone.

We are the takers of night showers, and we stand in opposition to the takers of morning showers, a vocal many I've bickered with time and again.

Don't they feel rushed by the countdown to work or school beating down with the shower spray? Don't they want to squeeze in every possible, precious moment of sleep? Do they really step outside on icy mornings with wet hair, or take even *more* time to blow-dry? There's no rationale, or so I thought.

The case for a morning shower

People who love morning showers will tell you there is no better start to the day than by blasting away unruly bed hair and the crust of sleep, or for those who are particularly ambitious, wash off after a morning workout.

"Everybody in my house showered in the morning," said Nate Martins, a writer from San Francisco. After the water heated up, "we'd all stack up like dominoes," he said.

"Washing the sleep off, that's something that I still do," he said — much to the chagrin of his wife, Natalie, who's a steadfast night showerer. "There have been times where she's asked me to shower before bed, especially when I've spent a lot of time on public transit."

For those who have a hard time waking up, a morning shower can make a big difference, said Dr. Janet K. Kennedy, a clinical psychologist and sleep expert in New York. It can boost alertness, she said, but she recommends a somewhat cooler, not cold, shower to avoid raising your body temperature dramatically.

The good and the bad for Team Night

For those who struggle with insomnia, Dr. Kennedy said she'd suggest showering at night, about 90 minutes before bed. "The body naturally cools down as bedtime approaches, in sync with the circadian rhythm," she said. "Showering artificially raises the temperature again and allows for a faster cool down, which seems to hasten sleep."

Showering is also a good way to unwind and release muscle tension, she said, which aids sleep.

But don't get carried away. Those long, steamy showers spent unpacking the day and draining the water heater could damage your skin.

Dr. Gary Goldenberg, a dermatologist in New York and a professor at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, recommends a maximum of 5- to 10-minute showers in lukewarm water for most people. Sad, I know.

“Very hot showers tend to take the oil off your skin, and tend to irritate your skin,” he said. “The longer you are in the water, the higher the chance it is going to dry your skin.”

That goes for baths too, he said.

But let us not speak of the bath people.

There’s a bonus to taking **Dr. Goldenberg’s** advice: Short, cooler showers are kinder to the environment — as is capturing the water that’s being wasted while you wait for it to heat up, said Mary Ann Dickinson, president of the Alliance for Water Efficiency. “There are products on the market to help people time their showers and to capture water,” she said.

The alliance’s water calculator can help you evaluate your water use.

While there’s no intrinsic environmental benefit to showering in the morning or at night, some electricity providers like Con Edison in New York have reduced rates for night use. “If water is heated using electricity, there could be opportunity for lower electricity bills,” Ms. Dickinson said.

Does the timing matter for cleanliness?

Dr. Goldenberg says that for most people, there’s nothing inherently wrong with showering in the morning, at night or both.

But he knocked fans of night showers down a peg: We’re not keeping our sheets as fresh as we think we are.

“Humans tend to perspire at night,” **Dr. Goldenberg** said. “When you wake up in the morning, there’s all this sweat and bacteria from the sheets that’s just kind of sitting there on your skin.”

So take a quick shower in the morning, he said, “to wash all of that gunk and sweat off that you’ve been sleeping in all night.”

Not to mention, he added, that a lot of people are intimate at night. “There are so many reasons to shower in the morning,” he said.

Dr. Goldenberg also stressed that most people don’t need to use “real soap,” like Dial or Lever 2000. A gentle, fragrance-free cleanser is best, he said.

And while some people, particularly those with shorter tresses, wash their hair daily to keep it from standing on end, there’s no need to do so unless you have a particularly oily scalp, **Dr. Goldenberg** said.

If you have allergies or sensitive skin, or are concerned about the quality of your water, you may want to have it tested, said Phil Kraus, of Fred Smith Plumbing in New York. For example, New York City adds “quite a bit” of chlorine, an irritant, to its tap water, he said.

Why not the best of both worlds? (Or neither?)

One possible compromise: showering twice a day.

Caroline Bottger, a content marketing manager from New York, says that while she usually showers in the morning, she will sometimes shower twice, a decision influenced by her father, who grew up in the tropics and had that habit.

Doing so twice a day is generally fine for your skin and scalp, **Dr. Goldenberg** said, as long as both showers are quick and you don't have severe eczema or dermatitis.

If you go to the gym after work or if you work outside, "obviously you want to shower before you go to bed because there's a lot of sweat — bacteria can cause acne," he said. "And it stinks."

Heath Williams, an associate marketing director from Brooklyn, regularly showers twice a day, a habit he developed after college, when he was a schoolteacher.

"So many germs are floating around schools, and you're on your feet moving around all day, so a shower after felt like a necessity," he said.

And for those contrarians, there's also a case for showering midday. If you live in an apartment building where the water temperature fluctuates wildly, you might benefit from showering at off-peak hours, said Mr. Kraus, the plumber.

I must confess, begrudgingly, that all this information may sway me to add a quick morning rinse to my routine. My reasoning about clean sheets and efficiency may not hold up to expert scrutiny. But one thing's for sure: Working in a big city and touching more surfaces every day than I care to remember, I will always shower before bed. Can't disappoint my mom, after all.