

Strategies for Better Health

Paleo Circadian



We can be healthier daily when we cooperate with the natural rhythms of our bodies. For optimum health, synchronization with the day governs the biological timers embedded in our DNA. Today's chronic 24 hour lifestyle is shortening our life and literally killing us when mis-timed living is chronic. We are ancient creatures and our biological systems can't contend with the modern design for our day. While almost no one today can live an ancient timed life, we can follow strategies to strengthen our circadian code and relieve the chronic stress along with its wear and tear on our physical bodies and mental health.

Our parents and grandparents lived a very differently timed life than us and were healthier for it. Certain chronic diseases of today were limited or unheard of. The mechanics of the human circadian code and how a circadian related components open pathways for diseases to develop is better understood today. The key to better health is to strengthen your circadian code as it orchestrates every one of your body's processes and keeps them properly timed with each other.

Optimizing Health Through Paleo Circadian Strategy

Strengthening Your Body's Internal Clock

In our modern world of artificial lights, irregular schedules, and constant connectivity, many people experience disrupted circadian rhythms. Our internal clocks regulate nearly every aspect of our physiology. These rhythms, evolved over millennia in perfect harmony with natural day-night cycles, influence sleep, hormone release, metabolism, immune function, and cognitive performance. A Paleo Circadian strategy gets its inspiration from our long ago ancestors, who lived without lights, electricity, screens, and the other devices of our modern lifestyle, aligning their biology to the sun's daily rise and set. We can strengthen our circadian code, synchronizing our body's myriad systems so they work together to support peak physical and mental health.

Without circadian synchronization, we risk numerous chronic diseases like obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and mental health disorders like depression. With a little work and creating simple habits we can feel better and be healthier. Lets explore some very simple ways to use paleo strategies to realign your rhythms.

Understanding our Circadian Code and its Paleo Roots

Circadian rhythms are 24-hour cycles governed by the suprachiasmatic nucleus (SCN) in the brain, which responds to primarily light cues. Every cell, organ, and system in our body has its own clock and time-based scheduled processes, creating a symphony of perfectly timed processes: cortisol peaks in the morning for alertness. Melatonin rises at night for sleep. Digestion and glucose optimizes during daylight hours followed by peak work times. Recovery and healing systems peak when we rest. Our ancestors, hunter-gatherers, from the Paleolithic era, naturally synced with the the day's cues. They of course had no alarm clocks, no late-night screens. They rose with the sun, hunted and gathered during the day, and rested in darkness.

Today's circadian misalignment (circadian disruption) occurs through shift work, jet lag, work and school schedules, and chronic poor habits such as nighttime eating and improper lighting. Studies indicate this lifestyle contributes to chronic diseases; for instance, night shift workers have higher risks of type 2 diabetes, and cancer due to disrupted insulin sensitivity and DNA and cellular repair processes, and suppressed immune system response. Similarly, irregular sleep patterns correlate with inflammation, a root cause of heart disease and autoimmune conditions. By reverting to paleo principles, following Earth's cues, we can reinforce and even strengthen our natural rhythms so all our systems work properly together, potentially preventing or mitigating these chronic diseases. When we don't support our circadian system, the circadian response becomes weaker, our bodies less responsive to the natural cues that keep all our internal circadian clocks aligned and systems optimized and running most efficiently together. Bright days, dim evenings, dark nights and regular lifestyle patterns are key to a strong circadian code.

We all inherit biological weaknesses from our parents. These are our weak points where stress will break our physical biology first. As we age, these weaknesses will be where our physical body wears out and degrades. Fragile points in our physiology will fail unless we counter the constant stressing. We can reduce the stress to our body by strengthening our circadian code by making sure all our systems are aligned and properly timed. We can even prevent other health problems that will eventually show up unexpected and not in our ancestors list of biological weaknesses. Modern pollutants also stress our biology. A strong circadian code can help our bodies stand up to external environmental stressors and help us avoid chronic diseases from our own inherited list of vulnerabilities.

Our bodily systems, like respiratory, digestive, circulatory, and our organs like our heart, stomach, liver, pancreas, brain, and muscles, do not always function in the same way throughout the day. Key processes change. Every cell in our body

needs rest time where it repairs itself and ‘takes out the trash’. The rest cycle is especially important for our brain. These changes are synchronized by the SCN, our Master Clock, but each sub-clock has its own programming, and cycle length, custom coded in your DNA to take care of all the required sub-processes for our body to function. Just like you inherited the color of your hair and eyes, DNA expression, along with the clocks flipping DNA switches on and off, control how your various body systems, organs, and cell operate throughout the day. Keeping all the timings of the body synchronized is obviously incredibly important for well-being, good health, and long life.

Key Strategies to Strengthen Your Circadian Rhythms Paleo-Style

To optimize your circadian code, focus on natural synchronizers: light, food, physical movement or exercise, and rest. These strategies are simple, mimicking ancestral daily patterns.



1. Prioritize Natural Light Exposure and Darkness.

Light is the strongest *zeitgeber* (time-giver, time synchronizer, cue) for your circadian clock. Ancestors spent the days outdoors, absorbing full-spectrum sunlight.

Morning Ritual: Start your day with 10-30 minutes of natural sunlight exposure upon waking. This suppresses melatonin and boosts serotonin, enhancing mood and energy. Avoid sunglasses

initially to let blue-rich morning light reset your SCN so that it messages all your body’s systems and synchronizes them.

Daytime Optimization: Spend time outside during the day, aiming for at least 2 hours of bright sunlight exposure. If indoors, use full spectrum lights or position yourself near windows.

Evening Wind-down: Emulate paleo darkness by dimming lights after sunset. Use amber or red bulbs, and avoid blue light from screens at least 2 hours before bed - blue light inhibits melatonin rise. Maybe spend time stargazing. As you



sense the melatonin rise, don't fight it. Participate with your body and go to bed and support the circadian rest cycle.

2. Align Eating Patterns with Daylight Hours

Paleo eating wasn't just about whole foods; it was timed with activity and light. Modern intermittent fasting echoes this.

Time-Restricted Eating (TRE)

Confine meals and snacking to a 8 to 12 hour window during daylight. This synchronizes digestion with peak metabolic efficiency. Be consistent. Late night eating disrupts timing relationships between the stomach, liver, pancreas, intestines, colon, and more, leading to weight gain and insulin resistance.



3. Time Physical Activity to Natural Cycles

Exercise in paleo times was sporadic and daylight bound - hunting by day, resting at night. Schedule vigorous activity like running, weightlifting, or hiking in the morning or early afternoon when cortisol and body temperatures and fuel (glucose) are higher, enhancing performance and using up the fuel.

Evening Gentle Movement:

Opt for walking or yoga post-sunset to wind down, avoiding intense sessions that spike adrenaline and delay sleep.

Be Consistent as possible with your daily routine

Regular timed exercise strengthens peripheral clocks in muscles and organs, aiding in disease prevention, such as reducing cancer risk through improved immune systems. When your body knows what to expect, it can be better prepared to respond to normal stress like exercise or even unexpected events.



4. Establish Consistent Rest and Sleep Hygiene

Our ancestors slept in sync with the sun, averaging 6-8 hours in cooler, darker conditions.

Fixed Schedule: Go to bed and wake at consistent times, even on weekends, to anchor your clock. Aim for 7-9 hours.

Paleo Sleep Environment: Keep bedrooms cool (60-70), quiet, and gadget free.

Disrupted sleep contributes to cognitive decline and mood disorders; consistent sleep rhythms can reverse this.



5. Minimize Modern Disruptors

Limit caffeine after noon, as it delays your circadian clock by blocking adenosine.

Reduce alcohol and processed foods, which impair liver clocks and melatonin.

Avoid bright lights inside or light into your home from streetlights and external building lights. Blackout curtains are not helpful as they will block natural morning light and delay your body's preparation for the day.



6. Manage stress and disruption with nature immersion, meditation, or spiritual practices.

Chronic stress desynchronizes our circadian clocks. Forest bathing and stargazing are two such activities.



7. Pay attention to your Circadian Clock!

Learn to recognize the feeling of your circadian response and support it. The more you can support it, the stronger your circadian response will be. The stronger your circadian response is, the more healthy you will be.