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Title: Evening high-intensity interval exercise does not disrupt sleep or alter free-living energy intake despite changes in acylated ghrelin in middle-aged men

Running Title: Evening exercise, sleep and appetite

Authors: Penelope Larsen¹, Frank Marino¹, Kerri Melehan^{2,3}, Kym J Guelfi⁴, Rob Duffield⁵, Melissa Skein¹

Affiliation: ¹ School of Exercise Science, Sport and Health, Charles Sturt University, Bathurst, Australia;

² Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Sydney;

³ Discipline of Sleep Medicine, University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia;

⁴ School of Human Sciences (Exercise and Sports Science), University of Western Australia, Perth, Australia;

⁵ Sport and Exercise Discipline Group, University of Technology Sydney, Australia.

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Correspondence: Penelope Larsen

School of Exercise Science, Sport & Health

Charles Sturt University

Panorama Avenue, Bathurst, Australia, 2795

Phone: +61 2 6338 6101

Email: plarsen@csu.edu.au

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1 **Abstract**

2 Many adults remain inactive, despite exercise benefits for sleep and appetite, due to increased time-
3 restraints. Methods to improve exercise compliance include preferential time-of-day or engaging in
4 short-duration, high-intensity interval exercise (HIIE). Hence, this study aimed to compare effects of
5 HIIE time-of-day on sleep and appetite. Eleven inactive men undertook sleep monitoring to determine
6 baseline (BASE) sleep stages and exclude sleep disorders. On separate days, participants completed
7 30min HIIE (60s work at 100% $\dot{V}O_{2peak}$; 240s rest at 50% $\dot{V}O_{2peak}$) in the 1) morning (MORN; 0600-
8 0700h), 2) afternoon (AFT; 1400-1600h) and 3) evening (EVEN: 1900-2000h). Measures included
9 appetite-related hormones (acylated ghrelin, leptin, peptide tyrosine tyrosine), and glucose pre-
10 exercise, 30min post-exercise, and next morning; overnight polysomnography (PSG; sleep stages); and
11 actigraphy, self-reported sleep and food diaries for 48h post-exercise. There were no between-trial
12 differences for total sleep time ($p=0.46$). Greater stage N3 sleep was recorded for MORN ($23 \pm 7\%$)
13 compared to BASE ($18 \pm 7\%$; $p=0.02$); however, no between-trial differences existed ($p>0.05$). Rapid
14 eye movement (REM) sleep was lower and non-REM sleep was higher for EVEN compared to BASE
15 ($p\leq 0.05$). At 30min post-exercise, ghrelin was higher for AFT compared to MORN and EVEN ($p=0.01$);
16 while glucose was higher for MORN compared to AFT and EVEN ($p\leq 0.02$). No between-trial differences
17 were found for perceived appetite ($p\geq 0.21$) or energy intake ($p=0.57$). Evening HIIE can be performed
18 without subsequent sleep disruptions and reduces acylated ghrelin. However, perceived appetite and
19 energy intake appear to be unaffected by HIIE time-of-day.

20 **Keywords:** Sleep, vigorous exercise, appetite regulation

21 **Introduction**

22 Regular exercise is believed to be an important behaviour to assist in the improvement of sleep
23 (Buman *et al.*, 2014). However, there has been coincidental reductions in exercise participation and
24 sleep duration in recent decades which is reportedly due to a commonly cited barrier of 'lacking time'
25 (Rajaratnam & Arendt, 2001; Gibala *et al.*, 2012; Buman *et al.*, 2014). For example, in Australia peak
26 inactivity occurs at 35-54 years of age (ABS, 2015), while 60-64% of this age group also have at least
27 one persistent sleep problem such as not obtaining adequate sleep, feeling unrefreshed upon waking,
28 or waking frequently during the night (Adams *et al.*, 2017). In addition, reduced sleep duration has
29 also played a significant role in the upregulation of the orexigenic hormone acylated ghrelin and
30 downregulation of anorexigenic hormones such as leptin and peptide tyrosine tyrosine (PYY) which is
31 highlighted in acute sleep deprivation studies (Magee *et al.*, 2009; Omisade *et al.*, 2010; St-Onge *et*
32 *al.*, 2012). To combat this, short duration, high-intensity interval exercise has been encouraged to
33 increase exercise participation (Gibala *et al.*, 2012). Also, the physiological basis for this type of
34 exercise in relation to sleep and appetite is supported by evidence of increased sleep efficiency and
35 reduced sleep onset latency (Dworak *et al.*, 2008; Hayashi *et al.*, 2014); increased anorexigenic
36 signalling and subsequent reduction of energy intake (Sim *et al.*, 2014; Broom *et al.*, 2017); and higher,
37 longer lasting reductions on post-prandial glucose compared to moderate-intensity exercise (Little *et*
38 *al.*, 2014).

39

40 The American Academy of Sleep Medicine (2001) supports the recommendation of regular exercise
41 to aid sleep; although, it is advised to avoid high-intensity or vigorous exercise close to bed time since
42 this may increase arousal and disrupt subsequent sleep. However, the evidence for this is limited and
43 appears to be a common warning which has come from early exercise and sleep research rather than
44 recommendations that have evolved from more recent research (Irish *et al.*, 2015). Instead,
45 experimental findings indicate that sleep is not disturbed by evening high-intensity exercise but may
46 improve some variables including sleep efficiency, stage N3 sleep and sleep onset latency (O'Connor

47 *et al.*, 1998; Youngstedt *et al.*, 1999; Flausino *et al.*, 2012; Myllymäki *et al.*, 2012; Robey *et al.*, 2013;
48 Hayashi *et al.*, 2014). It has been postulated that the acute body-heating, anxiolytic and antidepressant
49 effects of exercise may, in part, explain these observed sleep changes following evening high-intensity
50 exercise (Youngstedt, 2005). Nevertheless, most studies have recruited young, active adults already
51 obtaining recommended sleep quantity and thus do not represent the age-associated changes in sleep
52 patterns experienced by many middle-aged, inactive adults (Copinschi *et al.*, 2014). Given that sleep
53 quantity decreases with age, it is possible that older populations may be more responsive to acute
54 exercise stimuli due to greater room for change (i.e. not hindered by a ceiling effect) (Youngstedt,
55 2005). It may also be important to examine sleep patterns following evening high-intensity exercise in
56 middle-aged populations compared to high-intensity exercise performed in the morning and
57 afternoon (i.e. 4 to 8 hours prior to bed time) (Irish *et al.*, 2015) as discouraging evening high-intensity
58 exercise, particularly of short duration, may remove a preferential time-of-day for exercise or
59 eliminate exercise altogether for time-poor individuals (Buman *et al.*, 2014).

60

61 Further consideration is needed for metabolic functioning following evening high-intensity exercise
62 and potential changes in subsequent sleep. For instance, should evening high-intensity exercise induce
63 poor sleep outcomes such as shortened total sleep time, and increased sleep onset latency and wake
64 after sleep onset it is likely to be associated with elevations in acylated ghrelin concentration and
65 reduced anorexigenic peptide levels including leptin and PYY (Magee *et al.*, 2009; Omisade *et al.*, 2010;
66 St-Onge *et al.*, 2012). In isolation, high-intensity interval exercise, has been shown to have a positive
67 effect on acylated ghrelin, leptin and PYY, and further associated with favourable reductions in energy
68 intake for up to 24 h post-exercise (Thivel *et al.*, 2012; Sim *et al.*, 2014; Panissa *et al.*, 2016). However,
69 in these studies, exercise was performed in the morning and due to circadian variations responses
70 may not reflect hormonal changes following exercise performed in the afternoon or evening. Leptin
71 has been previously examined following a 30 s Wingate anaerobic test performed in the morning and

72 evening whereby authors observed no difference between trials (Bilski *et al.*, 2016). However, ghrelin
73 and PYY have yet to be investigated in relation to exercise time-of-day.

74

75 Given the potential interaction between exercise, sleep and appetite, it may be important to
76 investigate the role of exercise on sleep and appetite simultaneously due to the complex pathways
77 which regulate these physiological processes (Copinschi *et al.*, 2014). As such, the aim of this study
78 was to compare the effect of high-intensity interval exercise performed in the morning, afternoon and
79 evening on sleep, appetite-related hormones and free-living energy intake in inactive, middle-aged
80 men. It was hypothesized that high-intensity afternoon and evening exercise would increase the
81 proportion of stage N3 sleep compared to baseline and morning exercise; while all exercise trials
82 would induce favourable appetite changes (anorexigenic changes in the circulating hormones and
83 reduced energy intake) due to the implementation of a standardised high-intensity exercise protocol.

84

85 **Methods**

86 *Ethical Approval*

87 Each participant was required to provide informed written consent to the protocols, which were
88 approved by the Charles Sturt University Human Ethics Committee (H16136). This study conformed to
89 the standards set by the *Declaration of Helsinki*, except for registration in a database.

90

91 *Participants*

92 Eleven overweight, inactive men (mean \pm SD; age: 49 ± 5 y; apnoea hypopnea index (AHI): 12 ± 4 ; BMI:
93 28 ± 3 kg·m⁻²; $\dot{V}O_{2peak}$: 34 ± 8 ml·kg⁻¹·min⁻¹) completed this study. Inclusion/exclusion criteria included
94 non-smokers, participating in < 150 min of moderate-intensity exercise per week, had no previous or

95 current diagnosis of sleep or metabolic disorders, and no medical conditions or medications that affect
96 sleep quality or quantity. Volunteers were also excluded if the baseline PSG studies indicated an AHI
97 of ≥ 15 . Initially, 13 men volunteered to participate in the study; however, one participant was
98 excluded due to signs of severe sleep apnoea and one participant withdrew due to an illness unrelated
99 to the study. Sleep was initially assessed by the STOP-BANG questionnaire (Chung *et al.*, 2008), the
100 Epworth Sleepiness Scale (Johns, 1991) and the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI) (Buysse *et al.*,
101 1989). Risk of sleep apnoea was further assessed during two consecutive nights of polysomnography
102 (PSG) measurement. Medical clearance was obtained from a General Practitioner and a Pre-Exercise
103 Medical Health Questionnaire was completed by each participant prior to enrolling in the study to
104 ensure no underlying conditions would be exacerbated by vigorous exercise.

105

106 *Experimental Overview*

107 Participants attended the laboratory for an initial familiarisation session and baseline assessments of
108 anthropometry and peak oxygen consumption ($\dot{V}O_{2peak}$) and habitual sleep and eating patterns were
109 documented for 7 days prior to testing. During this time, two consecutive nights of PSG sleep testing
110 were conducted to exclude sleep apnoea and record normal sleep stages and arousals. Following
111 baseline (BASE), participants completed three experimental trials (4 days duration for each) in a
112 randomised fashion. The experimental trials included 30 min of high-intensity interval exercise (60 s
113 at 100% $\dot{V}O_{2peak}$: 240 s at 50% $\dot{V}O_{2peak}$) (Sim *et al.*, 2014) performed 1) in the morning (MORN: 0600 -
114 0700 h), 2) afternoon (AFT: 1400 - 1600 h), and 3) evening (EVEN: 1900 - 2000 h). Experimental trials
115 were separated by a minimum of 5 days recovery. Primary outcome measures included post-exercise
116 sleep quality and quantity, changes in plasma concentrations of appetite-related hormones, ratings of
117 perceived appetite, and post-exercise free-living energy intake.

118

119 *Familiarisation and Baseline Testing*

120 The familiarisation session involved assessments of height, body mass, and waist and hip girths were
121 completed to calculate body mass index (BMI) and waist-to-hip ratio (WHR), respectively. Further,
122 $\dot{V}O_{2peak}$ was assessed using a ramp protocol (Barstow *et al.*, 2000) on a cycle ergometer (Lode B.V.,
123 Excalibur Sport, Groningen, The Netherlands) to calculate workloads for the experimental trials. The
124 $\dot{V}O_{2peak}$ test commenced at 50 W for the first 2 min and increased 25 W every minute thereafter with
125 cadence maintained at 70 rpm until volitional exhaustion. During the test, heart rate (HR; F1, Polar,
126 Electro-Oy, Kempele, Finland) was monitored every minute and breath-by-breath pulmonary gas
127 exchange was obtained via a mouthpiece connected to a calibrated metabolic gas oxygen analysis
128 system and custom-developed software (LabVIEW; National Instruments, Austin, TX, USA).

129

130 At-home baseline data was obtained for a total of 7 days which included 7 nights actigraphy recorded
131 via a wrist-worn actigraph (Actiware 2, Philips Respironics, Andover, MA), alongside a diary to verify
132 sleep bed and wake times, and food intake. During this time, participants were instructed to maintain
133 usual bed time, wake time, and diet. These data were obtained to provide a representation of habitual
134 sleep quantity, behaviour and diet as a comparative control (Champagne *et al.*, 2013; Bei *et al.*, 2016).
135 The two nights of PSG sleep measurement were conducted during the 7 night baseline period,
136 depending on participant and equipment availability. A level II, take home PSG device was used to
137 exclude sleep disorders and record baseline sleep stages and arousals.

138

139 *Experimental Trials*

140 During each experimental trial, participants did not engage in physical activity and documented all
141 food and drink consumption 24 h prior to exercise. On the day of exercise, participants abstained from
142 alcohol and caffeine; and fasted overnight for the MORN trial to ensure participant's sleep on the night

143 prior to exercise was not shortened due to fasting requirements and for 3 h prior to the AFT and EVEN
144 trials. Upon arrival, participants indicated perceived hunger and fullness on validated Visual Analogue
145 Scales (VAS) (Flint *et al.*, 2000) and a capillary blood sample was obtained from the fingertip for the
146 assessment of appetite-related hormones and glucose. Participants then performed the high-intensity
147 interval protocol which consisted of 6 × 60 s maximal sprints (100% $\dot{V}O_{2peak}$) interspersed by 240 s of
148 active recovery (50% $\dot{V}O_{2peak}$) which equated to a total exercise duration of 30 min (Sim *et al.*, 2014).
149 Exercise was performed on a stationary cycle ergometer (Wattbike Trainer, Wattbike Ltd, Nottingham,
150 UK) and intensity was monitored via power output (PO) every minute. Heart rate (F1, Polar, Electro-
151 Oy, Kempele, Finland) responses were also recorded every minute for calculation and reporting of
152 mean HR across the entire exercise protocol. Participants also reported rating of perceived exertion
153 (RPE; 1-10 scale) (Borg, 1982) every 5 min. Immediately post-exercise, participants were instructed to
154 passively rest for 30 min, after which time a second blood sample was obtained, and perceived
155 appetite was recorded to assess the acute effects of exercise on appetite variables. That night, sleep
156 was recorded using a level II, take home PSG device and scored for sleep stages and arousals.
157 Participants returned to the laboratory the following morning (60 min after waking), for a fasted
158 capillary blood sample and reported perceived appetite to examine appetite variables in relation to
159 the preceding night's sleep. Actigraphy, and sleep and food records were maintained for 3 days during
160 each trial, including the day of exercise, one day after exercise, and two days after exercise (refer to
161 Figure 1). Data were examined for sleep quantity and energy intake up to 48 hours post-exercise.
162 Following exercise, participants were free to choose bed times, wake-up times, and food intake to
163 observe sleep and eating responses to the respective trials.

164

165 *Polysomnography*

166 Polysomnography was performed using recommended electrode and sensor placements (Berry *et al.*,
167 2016), connected to the Alice PDx system (Philips Respironics, Pittsburg, USA) and analysed using

168 Sleepware G3 software version 3.7.4 (Philips Respironics, Pittsburg, USA). Electrode and sensor
169 placements included: three electroencephalogram (EEG; F3-A2, C4-A1, and O1-A2) electrodes,
170 unilateral electrooculogram (EOG), chin electromyography (EMG), electrocardiography (ECG; lead I),
171 oxygen saturation via pulse oximetry, thoracic and abdominal respiratory effort via belts, and nasal
172 airflow via pressure transducer. The BASE sleep studies were scored to exclude sleep disorders and
173 data were used for the BASE sleep staging and arousal parameters; whereas, only the sleep staging
174 and arousal data were analysed for experimental sleep studies. All sleep studies were scored based
175 on standard guidelines (Berry *et al.*, 2016) by an experienced sleep technologist who was blinded to
176 the experimental trials. Sleep parameters assessed included time in bed, total sleep time (TST), sleep
177 efficiency (SE) $[(\text{sleep duration} - \text{wake time}) / \text{sleep duration}] \times 100$, sleep onset latency (SOL; time
178 from lights out to the first epoch of sleep), rapid eye movement (REM) onset latency, wake after sleep
179 onset (WASO; total time awake after sleep onset), percent of time spent in each sleep stage (N1: stage
180 1; N2: stage 2; N3: stage 3; total NREM: non-rapid eye movement sleep; REM), and arousal index.

181

182 *Actigraphy*

183 Actigraphy was recorded in 1 min epochs (Esliger & Tremblay, 2006) and analysed using Actiware v5.70
184 software (Philips Respironics, Pittsburgh, USA). Variables obtained included bed time, wake time, time
185 in bed (period between bed time and wake time), TST (time asleep during time in bed), SOL (period
186 between bed time and sleep onset), SE (percent of time in bed spent sleeping), WASO (total time
187 awake after sleep onset), and number of awakenings (Knutson *et al.*, 2007).

188

189 *Appetite Perception and Hormones*

190 Perceived hunger and fullness were assessed using a VAS comprised of straight lines (100 mm)
191 accompanied by a question anchored with words representing opposing extreme states of hunger and

192 fullness at either end (Flint *et al.*, 2000). A 600 μ l sample of blood was collected from a fingertip using
193 a sterile lancet. To assist vasodilation, the hand was submerged in a bowl of warm water for 5 min
194 prior to blood draw. Blood glucose concentration was measured directly from the fingertip using an
195 Accu-Chek Performa (Roche, Mannheim, Germany). The remaining blood was immediately aliquoted
196 into pre-chilled EDTA tubes (Becton Dickinson, Sydney, Australia) treated with serine protease
197 inhibitor (25 μ l per 600 μ l of blood; Pefabloc[®] SC, Sigma-Aldrich, St. Louis, USA) then immediately
198 centrifuged at 3000 rpm for 10 min. Plasma obtained was stored at -80°C and later analysed according
199 to manufacturer's instructions for acylated ghrelin, leptin and PYY_{total} using a commercially available
200 assay kit (Cat. No# HMHEMAG-34K; Milliplex, Millipore Corporation, MA, USA). These hormones were
201 chosen based on previous literature demonstrating their responsiveness to exercise (Broom *et al.*,
202 2009; Balaguera-Cortes *et al.*, 2011) and association with sleep and appetite (Spiegel *et al.*, 2011). For
203 acylated ghrelin, leptin and PYY_{total} the intra- and inter-assay coefficient of variations were < 10% and
204 < 15%, respectively.

205

206 *Sleep and Energy Intake Records*

207 Sleep diary entries were used to confirm bed times and wake-up times for actigraphy data. For food
208 records, instructions on the use (including a 1 day example), and the necessity for accurate (i.e. food
209 and drink brands and quantities) and detailed recordings of energy intake immediately after
210 consumption were emphasised. Total energy and macronutrient intake were calculated using
211 commercially available software (Foodworks; Xyris Software, Kenmore Hills, QLD, Australia). Also,
212 absolute (g) and relative data (%) were calculated for carbohydrate, fat and protein intake.

213

214 *Statistical Analysis*

215 A *priori* sample size calculations for a repeated measures ANOVA was performed using G*Power
216 (version 3.1.9.2) which confirmed that the final sample size of 11 participants was adequate for the
217 input parameters which included the PSG sleep variables as these were the primary study measures.
218 A repeated-measures (trial \times time interaction) ANOVA with a Bonferroni correction and Tukey's *post*
219 *hoc* were used to determine significant differences for performance, physiological and perceptual
220 measures, perceived appetite, glucose and appetite-related hormones, total and macronutrient
221 energy intake, PSG and actigraphy variables. PSG data were further separated to analyse the initial
222 180 min after sleep onset as the first 1-2 sleep cycles have been shown to be altered by acute stimuli
223 including evening high-intensity exercise (Myllymäki *et al.*, 2012). Analysis was performed using
224 Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v 20.0, Chicago, USA). Data are reported as mean \pm
225 standard deviation (SD) and statistical significance was accepted at $p \leq 0.05$.

226

227 **Results**

228 *Exercise Responses*

229 There was no significant difference for mean power output between MORN (355 ± 106 W), AFT (396
230 ± 126 W) or EVEN (391 ± 139 W) ($p = 0.11$; Figure 2A). As for trial \times time interactions, power output
231 was higher at sprint 1 and sprint 2 for AFT compared to MORN ($p \leq 0.05$). While for EVEN, power
232 output was greater at sprint 2 compared to MORN ($p = 0.01$; Figure 2A). Mean heart rate was $126 \pm$
233 13 bpm for MORN, 132 ± 10 bpm for AFT, and 130 ± 9 bpm for EVEN. Mean heart rate for AFT was
234 higher compared to MORN ($p = 0.05$). There was no trial \times time interaction for RPE; although, a main
235 effect of time for all trials indicated increased RPE from sprint 1 to sprint 6 ($p \leq 0.01$; Figure 2B).

236

237 *Sleep Questionnaires, Polysomnography and Actigraphy*

238 The results for the STOP-BANG questionnaire, Epworth Sleepiness Scale and PSQI at baseline were 2
239 ± 1 , 7 ± 4 and 5 ± 2 , respectively. Whole night and initial 180 min polysomnography data are presented
240 in Table 1. There were no significant differences for time in bed, total sleep time, sleep efficiency,
241 sleep onset latency, wake after sleep onset, stage N1 and N2 sleep, or arousal index between BASE,
242 MORN, AFT and EVEN ($p > 0.05$). However, there was a greater proportion of stage N3 sleep following
243 MORN compared to BASE ($p = 0.02$). There was a greater proportion of NREM sleep after EVEN
244 compared to BASE for whole night sleep ($p = 0.05$) and initial 180 min of sleep ($p = 0.006$). Also, for
245 the initial 180 min of sleep, proportion of REM sleep was lower for EVEN compared to BASE ($p = 0.006$).
246 Analysis of actigraphy data (Table 2) showed there were no trial \times time interactions for all variables (p
247 > 0.05). However, there was a main effect of time for all trials which indicated a lower number of
248 awakenings on the night post-exercise compared to one ($p = 0.05$) and two days post-exercise ($p =$
249 0.04).

250

251 *Perceived Appetite and Appetite-Related Hormones*

252 There was no trial \times time interaction for perceived hunger ($p = 0.51$) or perceived fullness ($p = 0.21$;
253 Figure 3). The hormone and glucose responses for MORN, AFT and EVEN are shown in Figure 4. There
254 was a trial \times time interaction for acylated ghrelin, with post hoc analyses revealing significantly higher
255 values pre-exercise for AFT compared to MORN ($p = 0.001$) and EVEN ($p = 0.03$), and for EVEN
256 compared to MORN ($p = 0.004$; Figure 4A). Acylated ghrelin remained higher 30 min post-exercise for
257 AFT compared to MORN and EVEN ($p = 0.01$), while concentrations were higher for EVEN compared
258 to AFT the morning post-exercise ($p = 0.01$; Figure 4A). The percentage change of acylated ghrelin was
259 $-34 \pm 50\%$ for MORN, for AFT $-68 \pm 30\%$ and $-74 \pm 37\%$ for EVEN ($p = 0.06$). Glucose values at 30 min
260 post-exercise were higher for MORN compared to AFT and EVEN ($p \leq 0.02$; Figure 4D). Also, the
261 percentage change in glucose was $26 \pm 25\%$ for MORN, AFT for $16 \pm 21\%$ and $14 \pm 28\%$ for EVEN from
262 pre to 30 min post-exercise ($p = 0.37$). There was no trial \times time interaction for leptin or PYY_{total} ($p >$

263 0.05). Although, there was a main effect of time for leptin in which values were higher at pre-exercise
264 and the morning after exercise compared to 30 min post-exercise for all trials ($p \leq 0.01$; Figure 4B).
265 The percentage change of leptin was $-35 \pm 20\%$ for MORN, for AFT $-34 \pm 27\%$ and $-29 \pm 16\%$ for EVEN
266 ($p = 0.64$). While, the percentage change of PYY_{total} was $20 \pm 61\%$ for MORN, for AFT $88 \pm 157\%$ and 22
267 $\pm 81\%$ for EVEN ($p = 0.17$).

268

269 *Free Living Energy Intake*

270 Total energy intake and macronutrient intake is presented in Table 3. There were no significant
271 differences between trials for total energy intake ($p = 0.57$), and carbohydrate, fat, protein, sodium,
272 sugar or caffeine intake ($p \geq 0.09$).

273

274 **Discussion**

275 We investigated the effects of exercise time-of-day on sleep patterns, appetite responses and
276 subsequent free-living energy intake in overweight, inactive men. Our novel findings show that many
277 sleep variables do not differ to high-intensity interval exercise performed at different times of day.
278 Although, the proportion of stage N3 sleep was higher after MORN compared to BASE; and after EVEN
279 there was an increase in NREM sleep and decrease in REM sleep compared to BASE in the initial 180
280 min of sleep. There was also a favourable decline in acylated ghrelin from pre-exercise to 30 min post-
281 exercise for AFT and EVEN compared to MORN; however, there were only small changes for all trials
282 in leptin and PYY_{total}. Similarly, there were no differences between trials for perceived appetite or
283 energy intake. Sprint power output during the high-intensity interval protocol was significantly higher
284 for AFT and EVEN compared to MORN despite no between-trial differences for mean power output.
285 Collectively, these findings indicate that acute evening high-intensity exercise does not impair
286 subsequent sleep patterns and is unlikely to alter energy intake compared to exercise performed at

287 other times of day or to no exercise. Although, the greater efforts during maximal sprints in the
288 afternoon and evening may stimulate larger reductions of orexigenic signals compared to morning
289 high-intensity exercise which would be of more benefit to appetite control long-term.

290

291 Findings from the present study are consistent with experimental evidence suggesting that vigorous
292 exercise performed close to bed time does not disrupt sleep (O'Connor *et al.*, 1998; Youngstedt *et al.*,
293 1999; Myllymäki *et al.*, 2011; Flausino *et al.*, 2012; Robey *et al.*, 2013; Hayashi *et al.*, 2014). Following
294 the evening trial, PSG data indicated an increase in NREM sleep and decrease in REM sleep
295 predominantly within the initial 180 min of sleep which have also been previously reported by Netzer
296 *et al.* (2001) and Robey *et al.* (2013). Netzer *et al.* (2001) further presented a correlation between an
297 extension of REM onset latency and reduction of REM sleep percentage in the first half of sleep with
298 an increase in norepinephrine following intense exercise. Although the mechanisms are not fully
299 understood, it is known that noradrenergic cells are tonically active during all sleep stages except for
300 REM sleep (Poe *et al.*, 2010). Given that high-intensity interval exercise, compared to moderate-
301 intensity exercise, is associated with a post-exercise 14.5 fold increase in norepinephrine release
302 (Boutcher, 2010), it is plausible that the presence of such high levels close to bed time are linked to
303 delayed REM sleep. Norepinephrine may further enhance and prolong long-term potentiation (i.e.
304 persistent strengthening of synapses based on recent patterns of activity) which occurs during NREM
305 sleep stages and facilitates the events to convert early long-term potentiation to lasting long-term
306 potentiation (Poe *et al.*, 2010). Nonetheless, opposing findings for evening vigorous exercise have
307 been presented by Souissi *et al.* (2012) whereby total sleep time and sleep efficiency were lower, and
308 sleep onset latency and awakenings increased compared to afternoon vigorous exercise. As such,
309 further research is needed to examine the potential influence of covariates including age, gender and
310 training status, that may affect sleep responses to evening high-intensity interval exercise.

311

312 Limited differences were observed in appetite responses; although, for the hormone changes, it did
313 appear that afternoon and evening high-intensity exercise induced greater changes in acylated
314 ghrelin, while morning high-intensity exercise altered glucose only. Interestingly, there was large
315 variation in pre-exercise acylated ghrelin concentrations which are likely attributed to the natural
316 circadian rhythm of this hormone which is typically lowest in the morning before progressively
317 increasing until mid-afternoon (Birketvedt *et al.*, 2012; Copinschi *et al.*, 2014). As such, relative
318 changes following exercise compared to pre-exercise values for the respective trials may provide a
319 clearer understanding of time-of-day effects on circulating ghrelin. In this study, the magnitude of
320 change for acylated ghrelin was larger following afternoon and evening trials compared to changes
321 after morning high-intensity interval exercise, but these differences were not significant. Nonetheless,
322 it is possible that the sprint power output differences between the afternoon and evening trials
323 compared to the morning trial induced the observed ghrelin changes from pre-exercise to 30 min post-
324 exercise. In support, Sim *et al.* (2014) observed a significantly greater reduction in ghrelin
325 concentration for a very high-intensity exercise protocol compared to high-intensity interval exercise,
326 moderate-intensity continuous exercise and a non-exercise control trial. Further, lower ghrelin levels
327 continued for the very high-intensity protocol for up to 90 min post-exercise (Sim *et al.*, 2014). Despite
328 implementing the same high-intensity interval protocol for all trials in the current study, sprint power
329 output, particularly for the first 2 sprints, was higher for AFT and EVEN compared to the MORN trial.
330 These data are largely supported by previous findings which report that maximal short-duration
331 performance output nadirs in the morning and peaks in the afternoon in general and athletic
332 populations (Atkinson *et al.*, 1993; Souissi *et al.*, 2002; Souissi *et al.*, 2004; Souissi *et al.*, 2007;
333 Chtourou & Souissi, 2012). Therefore, it may be more beneficial to engage in high-intensity interval
334 exercise in the afternoon and evening as performance output is likely to be greater leading to larger
335 reductions in orexigenic signals.

336

337 Despite the reduction in acylated ghrelin levels post-HIIE in the AFT and EVEN trials, there were no
338 associated reduction in perceived appetite or energy intake in this study. Much of the research
339 investigating energy intake following exercise has been conducted during morning hours. Bilski *et al.*
340 (2016) previously measured leptin following morning and evening high-intensity exercise, finding no
341 difference between trials. However, unlike the current study, authors did observe a reduction in
342 perceived hunger and post-exercise energy intake following both morning and evening high-intensity
343 exercise (Bilski *et al.*, 2016). Differences between studies may be due to the provision of an *ad-libitum*
344 meal to examine post-exercise energy intake compared to the self-reported diaries used in the present
345 study which may not be sensitive enough to detect significant changes in energy intake. Furthermore,
346 Bilski *et al.* (2016) only examined energy intake immediately post-exercise while the present study
347 investigated potential long-lasting exercise effects on energy intake (i.e. up to 48 hours post-exercise).

348

349 The novel aspect of the current study is the examination of sleep and appetite concurrently following
350 this distinct times-of-day. Even so, there are several limitations which need to be addressed and may
351 assist the direction of future research. The difference in time of fasting for the MORN trial (i.e. 10 h
352 overnight) compared to the AFT and EVEN trials (i.e. 3 h) were likely to have an effect on the diurnal
353 variations of the appetite-related hormones and glucose levels. However, the overnight fast was
354 chosen for the MORN trial to avoid forced sleep restriction which may also alter diurnal changes
355 (Spiegel *et al.*, 2004). Also, there were limited time points for the analysis of acylated ghrelin, leptin,
356 PYY_{total} and glucose; however, the three designated time points are in alignment with capturing acute
357 and prolonged responses across all hormones. Eating and sleep behaviour may have influenced energy
358 intake rather than changes in feeding mechanisms following high-intensity interval exercise
359 performed at different times of the day. As such, future research may benefit from assessing
360 prolonged energy intake in a controlled laboratory setting and collecting more frequent blood samples

361 to identify diurnal changes of appetite-related hormones and glucose after HIIE performed in the
362 morning, afternoon and evening.

363

364 In summary, this study does not support the recommendation of avoidance of evening high-intensity
365 exercise due to its effect on sleep. Rather this study shows high-intensity exercise can be safely
366 performed in the evening without subsequent detriment to sleep duration or arousal index. Also, high-
367 intensity exercise performed in the afternoon and evening are likely to be associated with greater
368 performance output; therefore, greater reductions in orexigenic signals. As such, collectively these
369 observations support the evening as a viable time-of-day for individuals to engage in high-intensity
370 exercise should this be a preferential time-of-day.

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Competing Interests

None declared.

Author Contributions

PL and MS developed the study concepts. PL collected data, performed the data analysis and prepared the manuscript. KM scored all the sleep studies. All authors provided important insight on data interpretation and contributed to the manuscript.

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Table 1. Mean \pm SD whole night and initial 180 min polysomnography for baseline (BASE), morning exercise (MORN; $n = 10$), afternoon exercise (AFT; $n = 11$), and evening exercise (EVEN; $n = 11$) trials.

	BASE		MORN		AFT		EVEN	
	Whole Night	Initial 180 min	Whole Night	Initial 180 min	Whole Night	Initial 180 min	Whole Night	Initial 180 min
Time in bed (min)	484.6 \pm 39.8		450.4 \pm 43.5		461.7 \pm 34.9		454.5 \pm 36.8	
Total sleep time (min)	405.7 \pm 54.4	163.7 \pm 14.3	387.7 \pm 55.9	169.1 \pm 6.7	407.1 \pm 40.7	167.5 \pm 11.3	392.6 \pm 33.9	171.1 \pm 5.0
Sleep efficiency (%)	83.7 \pm 6.9	90.8 \pm 7.9	86.0 \pm 6.3	93.7 \pm 3.7	88.2 \pm 5.6	92.8 \pm 6.3	86.5 \pm 5.4	94.9 \pm 2.8
Sleep onset latency (min)	23.1 \pm 16.2		19.5 \pm 11.7		18.4 \pm 15.2		20.4 \pm 14.3	
Rapid eye movement latency (min)	84.2 \pm 21.0	82.9 \pm 21.9	107.9 \pm 60.1	107.0 \pm 60.4	109.5 \pm 34.6	109.5 \pm 34.5	81.0 \pm 24.0	81.0 \pm 24.0
Wake after sleep onset (min)	55.7 \pm 32.6	16.7 \pm 14.2	43.1 \pm 27.6	11.1 \pm 6.8	36.2 \pm 21.6	13.0 \pm 11.3	41.5 \pm 24.9	9.2 \pm 5.1
Stage N1 sleep (%)	8.4 \pm 4.0	6.9 \pm 3.4	6.8 \pm 3.2	5.4 \pm 2.4	6.3 \pm 2.3	5.6 \pm 3.2	7.0 \pm 2.7	5.5 \pm 3.1
Stage N2 sleep (%)	53.9 \pm 5.9	52.8 \pm 7.9	54.2 \pm 8.0	50.4 \pm 8.9	55.5 \pm 7.7	55.3 \pm 7.9	56.3 \pm 8.9	53.9 \pm 14.1
Stage N3 sleep (%)	18.0 \pm 7.2	27.7 \pm 10.6	22.9 \pm 7.3 ^a	35.3 \pm 10.9	21.0 \pm 7.3	31.9 \pm 8.2	20.6 \pm 7.9	33.0 \pm 9.8
Non-rapid eye movement (%)	80.3 \pm 3.9	87.3 \pm 5.4	83.5 \pm 6.7	91.1 \pm 5.9	82.8 \pm 5.2	92.4 \pm 4.2	83.9 \pm 4.8 ^a	92.4 \pm 5.1 ^a
Rapid eye movement (%)	19.7 \pm 3.9	12.7 \pm 5.4	16.4 \pm 6.9	8.9 \pm 5.9	17.2 \pm 5.2	7.6 \pm 4.3	16.1 \pm 4.8	7.7 \pm 5.1 ^a
Arousal index (#/h)	12.4 \pm 4.2	5.8 \pm 5.8	12.8 \pm 3.6	5.4 \pm 4.1	12.3 \pm 4.3	3.6 \pm 3.9	10.8 \pm 4.1	3.4 \pm 2.8

^a Indicates differences compared to BASE ($p \leq 0.05$).

Table 2. Mean \pm SD actigraphy sleep data recorded at home for baseline (BASE), day of morning exercise (MORN-0), one day after MORN (MORN+1), two days after MORN (MORN+2), day of afternoon exercise (AFT-0), one day after AFT (AFT+1), two days after AFT (AFT+2), day of evening exercise (EVEN-0), one day after EVEN (EVEN+1), and two days after EVEN (EVEN+2) ($n = 11$).

	BASE	MORN-0	MORN+1	MORN+2	AFT-0	AFT+1	AFT+2	EVEN-0	EVEN+1	EVEN+2
Bed time (hh:mm)	22:15 \pm 0:33	22:15 \pm 0:34	22:35 \pm 0:38	22:24 \pm 0:36	22:29 \pm 0:39	22:10 \pm 0:39	22:21 \pm 0:46	22:24 \pm 0:51	22:20 \pm 0:39	22:34 \pm 0:57
Wake time (hh:mm)	6:24 \pm 0:45	5:49 \pm 0:32	6:21 \pm 0:43	6:22 \pm 0:51	6:02 \pm 0:35	6:22 \pm 1:05	6:27 \pm 1:13	6:02 \pm 0:38	5:59 \pm 0:32	5:56 \pm 0:34
Time in bed (hh:mm)	8:02 \pm 0:36	7:33 \pm 0:34	7:46 \pm 0:27	7:59 \pm 1:01	7:32 \pm 0:37	7:50 \pm 0:55	8:01 \pm 0:46	7:38 \pm 0:43	7:38 \pm 0:46	7:22 \pm 1:02
Total sleep time (hh:mm)	6:34 \pm 0:32	6:26 \pm 0:56	6:20 \pm 0:37	6:27 \pm 0:48	6:23 \pm 0:42	6:39 \pm 0:48	6:50 \pm 0:42	6:25 \pm 0:50	6:36 \pm 0:48	6:17 \pm 0:57
Sleep onset latency (min)	14.3 \pm 18.9	30.2 \pm 30.4	23.5 \pm 19.4	31.7 \pm 42.7	24.3 \pm 21.4	25.1 \pm 9.4	24.1 \pm 12.7	26.5 \pm 23.4	15.5 \pm 13.4	12.5 \pm 13.6
Sleep efficiency (%)	82.1 \pm 3.6	84.4 \pm 9.1	82.3 \pm 6.6	82.0 \pm 8.9	84.6 \pm 8.5	83.1 \pm 4.8	84.5 \pm 5.8	84.0 \pm 7.9	86.3 \pm 4.3	85.3 \pm 4.4
Wake after sleep onset (min)	41.1 \pm 13.9	29.6 \pm 9.1	45.4 \pm 18.3	46.3 \pm 27.6	32.3 \pm 17.6	41.7 \pm 18.9	36.1 \pm 13.9	35.8 \pm 17.6	36.0 \pm 8.7	38.2 \pm 10.1
Number of Awakenings (#)	20.4 \pm 3.6	17.9 \pm 5.3	23.4 \pm 6.6*	22.6 \pm 8.6*	17.6 \pm 4.9	22.3 \pm 6.0*	21.8 \pm 6.1*	16.9 \pm 4.5	21.0 \pm 7.4*	22.0 \pm 5.9*

* Indicates a main effect of time for all trials ($p \leq 0.05$).

Table 3. Mean \pm SD total energy and macronutrient breakdown for baseline (BASE), day of MORN (MORN-0), one day after MORN (MORN-1), two days after MORN (MORN-2), day of AFT (AFT-0), one day after AFT (AFT+1), two days after AFT (AFT+2), day of EVEN (EVEN-0), one day after EVEN (EVEN+1), two days after EVEN (EVEN+2) ($n = 11$).

	BASE	MORN-0	MORN+1	MORN+2	AFT-0	AFT+1	AFT+2	EVEN-0	EVEN+1	EVEN+2
Total Energy Intake (kJ)	8501 \pm 3248	8162 \pm 4274	8167 \pm 4166	7583 \pm 2928	7839 \pm 1283	7215 \pm 3266	7813 \pm 3544	6954 \pm 1337	6856 \pm 3294	6238 \pm 1641
Carbohydrates (g)	204 \pm 84	160 \pm 14	161 \pm 38	175 \pm 87	220 \pm 88	179 \pm 72	169 \pm 44	210 \pm 113	179 \pm 77	138 \pm 36
(%)	41 \pm 7	41 \pm 10	37 \pm 5	39 \pm 10	43 \pm 10	40 \pm 1	42 \pm 9	44 \pm 14	46 \pm 10	36 \pm 6
Fats (g)	78 \pm 37	73 \pm 42	60 \pm 23	68 \pm 29	83 \pm 28	66 \pm 43	61 \pm 34	70 \pm 22	51 \pm 21	67 \pm 32
(%)	34 \pm 6	33 \pm 8	33 \pm 7	34 \pm 7	37 \pm 6	32 \pm 10	30 \pm 8	36 \pm 11	35 \pm 8	35 \pm 6
Protein (g)	97 \pm 37	92 \pm 51	96 \pm 41	86 \pm 27	93 \pm 37	79 \pm 38	80 \pm 45	93 \pm 30	69 \pm 30	84 \pm 41
(%)	19 \pm 3	19 \pm 4	20 \pm 4	20 \pm 5	18 \pm 5	18 \pm 4	16 \pm 4	19 \pm 3	17 \pm 4	19 \pm 4
Sodium (mg)	2078 \pm 349	2511 \pm 1400	2384 \pm 1338	2302 \pm 1136	2658 \pm 713	1985 \pm 1372	1655 \pm 665	2890 \pm 1210	1956 \pm 1089	2112 \pm 1053
Sugar (g)	81 \pm 41	59 \pm 17	72 \pm 49	62 \pm 18	85 \pm 46	66 \pm 46	73 \pm 49	93 \pm 64	81 \pm 49	54 \pm 17
Caffeine (mg)	146 \pm 76	83 \pm 69	113 \pm 70	129 \pm 104	100 \pm 86	100 \pm 78	125 \pm 78	137 \pm 107	155 \pm 90	164 \pm 89