

LIFESTYLE GUIDE

The Recovery & Sleep Guide

Why this matters more than any workout, especially with young kids

Training breaks your body down. Recovery is what builds it back stronger. For dads running on broken sleep, this is often the single biggest lever for progress, bigger than any workout tweak.

8 Recovery Tools

Daily Application

Key Principles

Do's & Don'ts

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WHY RECOVERY MATTERS MORE AS YOU GET OLDER

Recovery capacity naturally declines with age, and a young family often means broken sleep on top of that. Understanding how to manage recovery deliberately becomes more important than any single training decision from your 30s onward.

THE NUMBERS



SLEEP TARGET

7-9 hours where possible. Genuinely difficult with young kids, but every extra 30 minutes matters.



REST DAYS

At least 1-2 full rest days per week, even during a busy training block.



DELOAD WEEKS

Every 6-8 weeks, reduce training volume by 40-50% for a week to let your body fully recover.

THE FOUNDATION RULE

Accept that broken sleep with young kids is a temporary season, not a permanent state. Adjust training intensity accordingly rather than fighting your circumstances.

8 RECOVERY TOOLS WORTH USING

Consistent Wake Time

SLEEP

Daily

Even with disrupted nights, a consistent wake time helps regulate your body clock over time.

Screen-Free Wind Down

SLEEP

30 mins

Reducing screens before bed improves sleep quality significantly, even on short nights.

Protein Before Bed

NUTRITION

Nightly

Supports overnight muscle repair, particularly useful when total sleep is limited.

Morning Sunlight Exposure

SLEEP

10 mins

Helps regulate your circadian rhythm, especially valuable when sleep is inconsistent.

Active Recovery (walking)

MOVEMENT

Rest days

Low intensity movement aids recovery more than doing nothing at all on rest days.

Hydration

NUTRITION

Daily

Even mild dehydration measurably impairs recovery and next-day training performance.

Stretching or Mobility Work

MOVEMENT

10 mins

A short daily routine reduces stiffness and supports better movement quality over time.

Strategic Caffeine Use

NUTRITION

As needed

Useful short-term but shouldn't become a permanent mask for chronic under-recovery.

HOW TO APPLY THIS WITH YOUNG KIDS

Recovery strategy needs to flex around your actual family situation, not an idealised version of it.

On genuinely broken-sleep nights

Reduce training intensity, swap heavy lifting for a lighter session or active recovery. Pushing hard on empty tank compounds fatigue.

On reasonable sleep nights

Train at your normal intensity, but still prioritise the basics; hydration, protein, some form of wind-down routine.

During particularly hard stretches (newborn, illness)

Drop to maintenance mode. 2-3 shorter sessions per week is enough to maintain strength until things stabilise.

SIMPLE DAILY RECOVERY CHECKLIST

Morning sunlight — 10 minutes

Water — 2+ litres across the day

Screens off 30 mins before bed

KEY PRINCIPLES FOR MANAGING RECOVERY

These principles matter more than any single recovery tool or gadget.

1

Sleep quality over quantity when hours are limited

A calm, dark, cool room matters even if you can't control how long you'll sleep.

2

Don't chase every workout at 100% intensity

Some sessions on low recovery should deliberately be easier, this isn't weakness, it's strategy.

3

Track energy, not just performance

If your energy is consistently low, that's a signal to adjust before it becomes an injury.

4

Use caffeine strategically, not habitually

Reserve it for when you genuinely need it rather than as a permanent daily crutch.

5

Recognise this is a season, not forever

Sleep with young kids improves over time, manage the current phase without burning out.

ADJUSTING TRAINING TO SLEEP QUALITY

Sleep Quality	Training Adjustment
Good (7+ hrs)	Train as normal, full intensity
Moderate (5-6 hrs)	Reduce intensity slightly, same volume
Poor (under 5 hrs)	Light session or active recovery only

DO

- ✓ Accept that broken sleep with young kids is temporary, adjust training intensity accordingly rather than fighting it.
- ✓ Prioritise sleep quality over quantity when you can't control the hours available.
- ✓ Use caffeine strategically, not as a permanent crutch for chronic under-recovery.

DON'T

- ✗ Don't train at maximum intensity every session when you're running on broken sleep, this compounds fatigue.
- ✗ Don't ignore persistent exhaustion thinking it'll just resolve itself, it's a signal to adjust, not a badge of honour.
- ✗ Don't rely on caffeine or pre-workout to mask chronic under-recovery, it treats the symptom, not the cause.

THE BOTTOM LINE

For a dad with young kids, managing recovery properly is often more important than any single training decision. Treat it as a genuine part of your programme, not an afterthought.

WANT THE FULL SYSTEM, NOT JUST ONE PIECE?

This guide is one piece of the puzzle. The Fit Dad Challenge brings training, nutrition and mindset together into one 6-week programme built around a dad's actual life.

[Join the Fit Dad Challenge — £99](#)