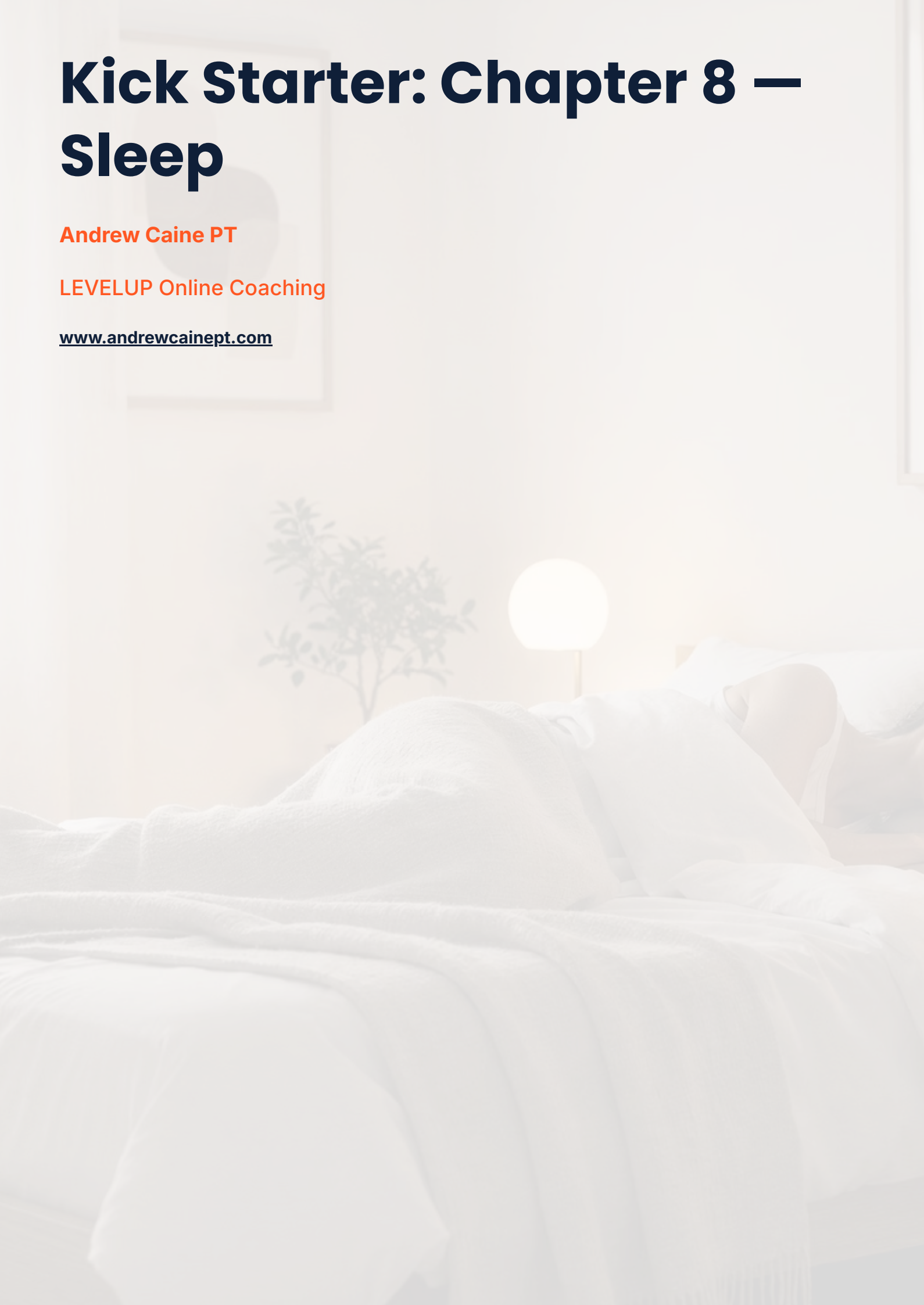
Kick Starter: Chapter 8 — Sleep

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Welcome

Hi there!

Welcome to the LEVELUP Online Coaching Kick Starter. Whether you are picking up a barbell for the first time or you have been training for years and are finally ready to do it properly — this is where we build the foundation. I have put together 8 chapters covering everything you need to get started with confidence: goal setting, nutrition, energy balance, building your diet, how training works, your training programme, how to track your progress, and why sleep is the variable most people are getting wrong.

Each chapter is focused on one thing — giving you the knowledge to execute your programme and get results that actually reflect the work you are putting in.

Let's get to work.

Andrew

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Why Sleep Matters

Most people treat sleep as the thing they cut when life gets busy. Late night, early alarm, get on with it. And then they wonder why their training feels harder than it should, why hunger is through the roof, why the scale is not moving despite doing everything right.

> Sleep is not passive recovery. It is when the majority of the physical and hormonal work of getting leaner, stronger and fitter actually happens. Treat it as optional and you are working against yourself every single day.

The research is unambiguous on this. Insufficient sleep disrupts the hormones that regulate appetite, impairs the muscle repair that training depends on, reduces cognitive function and decision-making, and increases cortisol — the stress hormone directly linked to fat retention and muscle breakdown. You can have your nutrition dialled in and your training structured perfectly and still undermine both with poor sleep.

Disrupts Hormones

Appetite regulation is thrown off, driving hunger and cravings

Impairs Muscle Repair

Training adaptations cannot complete without adequate sleep

Raises Cortisol

Directly linked to fat retention and muscle breakdown

Reduces Cognition

Decision-making and focus suffer with insufficient sleep

Seven to nine hours per night is the target for most adults. Quality matters as much as quantity — broken, restless sleep does not deliver the same benefits as uninterrupted sleep, even if the total hours look the same.

Sleep and Fat Loss

If fat loss is your goal, sleep needs to be treated as seriously as your calorie target.

Leptin & Ghrelin

Two hormones regulate hunger and appetite: **leptin**, which signals fullness, and **ghrelin**, which drives hunger. Poor sleep suppresses leptin and elevates ghrelin — the result is increased appetite, stronger cravings particularly for high-calorie foods, and a reduced ability to feel satisfied after eating. You are not weak-willed when this happens. You are running on a hormonal profile that is actively working against your deficit.

Insulin & Cortisol

Poor sleep also impairs insulin sensitivity, meaning the body handles carbohydrates less efficiently and is more likely to store energy as fat rather than use it. And it increases cortisol, which promotes fat storage — particularly around the abdomen — and can contribute to muscle breakdown.

None of this means one bad night derails your progress. But consistently poor sleep across weeks and months will make fat loss significantly harder, regardless of how well you train or how accurately you track your food.

Sleep and Recovery

> Training creates the stimulus for adaptation. Sleep is where that adaptation actually occurs.

During deep sleep the body releases growth hormone — the primary driver of muscle repair and tissue regeneration.

This is when the muscle fibres broken down in training are rebuilt stronger, when glycogen stores are replenished, and when systemic inflammation from training is resolved. Without adequate sleep, that process is incomplete.

You show up to the next session less recovered, perform worse, accumulate fatigue faster, and increase your injury risk over time.

→ **Deep Sleep → Growth Hormone Released**

The primary driver of muscle repair and tissue regeneration

→ **Muscle Fibres Rebuilt Stronger**

Glycogen stores replenished and systemic inflammation resolved

→ **Without Adequate Sleep — Process Is Incomplete**

Less recovered, worse performance, faster fatigue accumulation, higher injury risk

The practical implication is straightforward: if you are sleeping poorly and your training performance is declining, or you are consistently sore and fatigued, poor sleep is almost certainly a contributing factor.

Increasing training volume or intensity will not fix it — better sleep will.

How to Sleep Better

Set a consistent wake-up time.

This is the single most effective thing you can do for sleep quality. A fixed wake-up time — including weekends — anchors your circadian rhythm and regulates every downstream sleep process. Start here before anything else.

Reduce artificial light in the evening.

Light exposure after dark suppresses melatonin production and delays sleep onset. Dim household lights in the hour before bed. Use blue light filters on your phone and laptop, or wear blue light blocking glasses if you are going to be on screens late.

Avoid caffeine after 2pm.

Caffeine has a half-life of approximately five to six hours, meaning half of a 3pm coffee is still active in your system at 9pm. If you are sensitive to caffeine, cut off earlier. This alone improves sleep quality for a significant number of people.

Do not eat heavily close to bedtime.

A large meal within two hours of sleep can disrupt sleep onset and quality. A small, protein-rich snack is fine if you are hungry — but a full meal is not ideal.

Get morning sunlight.

Natural light exposure within the first hour of waking sets your circadian clock for the day and improves sleep quality that night. Even ten minutes outside makes a meaningful difference.

Build a wind-down routine.

Your nervous system needs a transition from the stimulation of the day to the state required for sleep. This does not need to be complicated — consistent low-stimulus activity in the thirty to sixty minutes before bed signals to the body that sleep is coming. Reading, a warm shower, stretching. Whatever works for you, keep it consistent.

Keep your room cool and dark.

Core body temperature drops during sleep. A cooler room — around 17 to 19 degrees — supports that process. Blackout curtains or a sleep mask help if your room gets light early.

Conclusion

> Sleep is not a lifestyle add-on. It is a core component of the programme — as important as your training and your nutrition, and the variable most people are systematically undervaluing.

Sort your sleep and almost everything else gets easier: fat loss accelerates, recovery improves, training performance goes up, hunger becomes more manageable, mood and concentration sharpen. It is the highest-leverage habit available to you, and it costs nothing.

Prioritise it accordingly.

Tools and Resources



Andrew Caine PT Academy

Access training guides, nutritional resources, and educational content.
www.andrewcainept.com



Andrew Huberman Podcast

Evidence-based content on health, fitness, performance, and neuroscience.



Examine

Research-backed resource covering nutrition and supplements.



YouTube

Useful for exercise tutorials and form guidance.



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