



Night RIDER

Funnyman **Seth Meyers** has spent a lot of time working into the wee hours of the morning. But the late-night host and long-distance runner swears that the key to his success is sleep. We catch up with the former *SNL* star about how he gets those all-important zzz's and why he approaches his current gig like the marathons he runs

BY LAUREN PAIGE KENNEDY
PHOTOGRAPH BY JAMES WHITE/NBC



SETH MEYERS

has plenty to grin about.

The former *Saturday Night Live* fixture and current *Late Night With Seth Meyers* host enjoys what long-distance runners refer to as being “in the zone.”

Now, with a good 18 months under his belt as Jimmy Fallon’s heir to NBC’s 12:35 a.m. talk show time slot, he’s fully hitting his stride. The jokes are flowing. His guests are bringing it. His banter with them never feels contrived. And he looks, well, really *pleased* to be there. So what’s the secret to Meyers’ success?

“Sleep!” he jokes. “Not only do I get eight hours every night with my new schedule, I get the *same* eight hours. At *SNL*, everyone’s always a little bit sick. No one’s ever 100 percent—everyone’s got half a cough and a bit of congestion, especially in winter. Because nothing breaks down the immune system at 3 a.m. on a Tuesday better than a Red Bull and some pizza. That’s a good way of telling your body: *You can let me die now. I don’t care about myself.*”

The New Hampshire native, 41, clearly does care about his health, so don’t take him too seriously. Meyers ran track in high school and for years has continued to log 5-mile runs four or five times each week. You’ll spot him jogging on the West Side Highway’s pedestrian path along the Hudson River, come rain, sleet, or shine. And while several of his old *SNL* pals have garnered ample tabloid attention for legendary levels of partying, Meyers’ most addictive vice seems to be carrying around his miniature greyhound, Frisbee, everywhere he goes. How’s that for being a wild and crazy guy?

Still, the comedian’s pivot in 2014 from *SNL*’s faux anchor on the “Weekend Update” desk—as well as his role as the iconic sketch comedy show’s head writer since 2006—to helping a nightly talkfest with roughly 250 original broadcasts to date was no cakewalk. “I take the responsibility to be healthy enough to do the show every night very seriously,” the host says. “Eating at the same time every day, sleeping enough—it all makes a difference. The thing is, doing ‘Weekend Update’—adrenaline can get you through that. But it can’t for *Late Night*. Not in the same way.”

SETH’S BEST WHAT KEEPS FUNNYMAN SETH MEYERS SMILING ALL THE TIME? HERE ARE A FEW OF HIS GET-HAPPY TIPS

Get a dog. Meyers famously dotes on his miniature greyhound, Frisbee. For him, puppy love is nothing new. According to animalfair.com, the comedian grew up in Bedford, N.H., with a “giant Pyrenees that was so big he could open the doors with his paws.” In addition, the Meyers clan always kept an Old English sheepdog.

Find your drive. When comic legend Jerry Seinfeld asked Meyers to appear on his online series, *Comedians In Cars Getting Coffee*, Meyers felt he’d died and gone to heaven. “That was one of the greatest three hours of my life, getting to sit and have coffee with Jerry, one of my heroes,” Meyers says.

Take laughter very seriously. “Being *SNL*’s head writer was such a formative time in my life. I make nonsense for a living, so I have to be no-nonsense in my approach to it. I get to do a comedy show every day! The reward is the comedy for an hour; the lead-up I take very seriously.”

Be with family. Meyers is extremely close to his. “My parents did an incredible job. They nipped in the bud at a young age that you could be anything other than supportive or loving to a sibling because your brother is also your best friend,” he says of actor Josh Meyers, 39, whom he’s interviewed on *Late Night*.

PHOTOGRAPH BY WILLIAMS+HIRAKAWA/CORBIS OUTLINE



Read **10 Common Running Injuries**, an article at WebMD.com.
LEARN HOW ON PAGE 10

That's why Meyers approaches his still-new gig like a marathon rather than a sprint, or even an unpredictable mix of 400s, 800s, and 5Ks—perhaps a better metaphor for the weekly unpredictable dash that is *SNL*. Meyers has run a few marathons, so he knows how to time his breath, endurance, and delivery. The show goes on only if the host is healthy enough to lead it.

ON THE RUN

"I was fairly sickly growing up," Meyers admits ruefully. "I was that kid who always had strep, bronchitis, and asthma. "Then I went to college, and immediately my asthma got better. I grew up around giant shedding dogs. It became clear I shouldn't be spending my youth around those furry bastards." He jokingly thanks his parents for this, adding: "I still carry around my inhaler in my bag, just in case. I actually had to use it a few weeks ago. If you've ever had asthma, you just feel safer having it with you."

Chronic respiratory problems and multiple-mile jaunts don't often jog well together. Did asthma hold back the performer's athletic prowess?

"I ran track in high school, but I was never a good, competitive runner," he says. "I lack *all* hand-eye coordination. Running is the only sport you can do where this is not required. But I've mostly maintained [a running schedule]. I run during the brutal New York winter! You're running, you're slipping—everything you're doing for your health you're likely undoing with your potential for extreme injury."

Turns out, this runner has recently been battling knee problems, diagnosed as iliotibial (IT) band syndrome. It's a common sports injury among runners and cyclists, caused by inflammation and friction along the thick band of fibrous tissue that begins at the hip, runs along the outer thigh, and attaches just below the knee. The band works with other muscles to provide stability to the knee during movement. But if damaged, each time the knee is bent or the hip is flexed, the band rubs against the bone, resulting in the deeply aching, increasingly intense pain known as "runner's knee."

Jeff Halevy, NBC fitness expert and trainer for first lady Michelle Obama's "Let's Move!" health initiative, explains that when such inflammation



occurs, "the body starts to move in suboptimal ways. It overcompensates with adaptive strategies in order to deal with these restrictions. Knee pain is not necessarily injury. Pain is defined as the body's anticipation of threat. The body thinks it's about to sustain structural damage, so the brain sends the body a pain signal. Runners are notorious—they get really good at training through pain. Minor pain then goes to true injury."

Meyers says he has a plan to do some cross-training so he can pound the pavement again soon. "I've reached the age when it's not super smart to run and *not* cross-train anymore."

Halevy agrees with this last sentiment—but only if Meyers does the *right* moves, which don't include hitting a swimming pool or bike path. "If you want to run without pain, you must restore strength, stability, and mobility first." (For tips, see "Knee Deep," on the next page.)

LIFE CYCLE

Even if the comedian does follow this advice and skips the outdoor biking, he'll attempt a challenging spin class soon—or at least encourage his fans to hop on recumbent bicycles for a great cause. That's because Meyers has served as the public face for Cycle for Survival since 2009. The charity raises money to help develop treatments for rare cancers.

According to NIH, a "rare cancer" is one that affects fewer than 200,000 people in the United States. They include brain, pancreatic, ovarian, and thyroid cancers; leukemia and lymphoma; all pediatric cancers; and many others. When these rare cancer types are combined, they account for

about half of all cancer diagnoses. Research on many rare cancers is drastically underfunded, often leaving patients with limited or no treatment options.

"It's personal," Meyers says of his involvement. "I went to college with [CFS co-founder] David Linn. He married Jennifer Goodman Linn, who was diagnosed with a rare cancer in 2006. She loved spin class. David has helped raise something like \$100 million for Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center with Cycle for Survival events—100% of which goes toward funding research for rare cancers. Jennifer passed away a few years ago. David keeps it going in her memory. And for me, it's the most inspiring day I have every year."

Last March, Cycle for Survival held events with Equinox gyms as its partner in 13 U.S. cities, attracting some 21,500 riders, who together pedaled hard (or hardly pedaled, depending on ability) while earning money for the cause. Leading up to the big spin-out, Meyers teased a running joke on *Late Night* that he was competing against

Knee DEEP

Personal trainer Jeff Halevy believes the key to preventing knee trouble starts with strengthening the body's core muscles.

Get strong before you go long.

"Strengthening connective tissues helps weather the stress of running. So train your entire body. The stronger you are overall, the more power you'll have."

Increase stability, mobility, and symmetry.

"Runners require hip symmetry," Halevy says. "To develop it, I recommend doing chin-ups which work the lat muscles that are under the armpit and lead to the hip. These muscles create movement and stability." Strong glutes and lower abdominal muscles are also important.

Build a better lower body. Halevy is a fan of lunges and step-ups because "strengthening these lower leg muscles opposite a strong corset and supports the IT [the iliotibial band in the knee]."

Mix it up. "Remember, repetition is the mother of injury," Halevy says. "It's so important for runners to vary their speed and track work. Run a 200m, a 400m, and an 800m; then do some uphill repeats. Create variability to prevent IT problems."

the charity's top earner, Perry Zimmerman, a soft-spoken 14-year-old rare-cancer survivor whose own Team Perry NYC raised a whopping \$879,134.21 this year alone.

"She made almost \$900,000; Team Seth made \$15,000—a close second! I like to say we made close to a million dollars, combined," he quips.

BEHIND THE SCENES

While Meyers has no plans to return as emcee for this year's Emmy Awards (he hosted the show in 2014), he plans to tackle other big endeavors this fall. They include a third season of his Hulu animated series, *The Awesomes*, plus the launch of *Documentary Now!* a faux documentary show on IFC that Meyers created with fellow *SNL* alumni Fred Armisen and Bill Hader.

"It's a different fake documentary every week, with six episodes," says Meyers of the show, which premieres August 20 at 10 p.m. "Helen Mirren is hosting it, which is hilarious. She does the same kind of voice-over role Laura Linney does on *Masterpiece*. Bill and Fred"—who star in the series—"are outstanding," he adds.

Between *Late Night With Seth Meyers* and his other projects, the comedian/comic book enthusiast/writer/producer is clearly a busy man. And a happy one, too: He's a newlywed.

Marriage is no joke for Meyers—unless, of course, he has an opportunity to rib actor George Clooney about it. Turns out, both handsome leading men married human rights lawyers with a flair for fashion. Meyers wed attorney Alexi Ashe in 2013 on Martha's Vineyard.

"Married life is outstanding," Meyers says. "I was very lucky to find such a wonderful, caring, and intelligent woman to spend my life with—and she's crazy healthy. Most of my robustness is due to her." He adds proudly: "We have a smoothie every day. And let me be sure to say: I'm the one who makes the smoothies, because she leaves for work earlier than I do. Which makes me the husband of the year."

Ashe often jogs with her husband; they bike together too. And let's not forget the frequent walking—or is it "carrying"?—of their first baby, Frisbee.

Could this sweet dog be a trial run for kids? "We are so nailing the dog thing right now," Meyers says. "If we do even half as well with kids, we'll be just fine."

PHOTOGRAPH BY SEBASTIAN KIM/MANAGEMENT-ARTISTS-SYNDICATION

Reviewed by Michael W. Smith, MD, CPT
WebMD Chief Medical Editor