

Sleep For Recovery in Athletes

Sleep for Recovery

Young athletes have a lot on their plate between school, sports, social life, and family time. Many times, sacrificing sleep is one way to fit it all in. Unfortunately by eliminating sleep, they are taking away the best time for recovery for their bodies. Sleep deprivation can also decrease muscle growth, affect learning, ability to focus, decrease reaction times, decrease energy stores, and increase chances of getting other health related problems. Athletes without the proper amount of sleep will appear more moody or grouchy.

How will it affect me?

Lacking sleep causes decreased recovery, muscle growth, reaction times, energy stores, which increases injury rates and also can cause decreased school performance. From a recent AAP study, athletes who sleep 8 or more hours a night are 68% less likely to be injured. Energy stores are also lower in sleep deprived athletes which affect endurance during sports such as soccer.

How much sleep is enough?

According to the National Sleep Foundation kids aged 10-17 need 8.5-9.25 hours of sleep a night, but often only get 7-7.25 hours a sleep. Each athlete is unique and may need more sleep than this! Before adolescence, most kids fall asleep naturally around 8-9pm. Puberty changes a teen's internal clock delaying the time he/she falls asleep, often until 11PM or later. With that bedtime, teens should sleep until about 8AM. A regular routine is important. Sleeping longer on weekends to "catch-up" often makes things worse.

Ways to Improve Sleep

1. Set a regular bedtime
2. Make your bedroom as dark as possible
3. Try to wake up to natural sunlight
4. Set your bedroom to a cooler temperature about 67° F
5. No iPod, iPad, cell phone for an hour before bedtime (blue light tricks the brain into thinking it's daylight)
6. Lose the Red Bull (no caffeine after 4PM)
7. Regular relaxing bedtime routine (no action movies)
8. Keep afternoon naps short

