

Mercy Sports Medicine

The Importance of Sleep



Want to compete like an all-star? Try sleeping like an all-star. Seven-time Wimbledon champion Roger Federer sleeps an average of 11 hours per day. NBA all-star LeBron James reports sleeping 12 hours per night. According to Olympic triathlete Jarrod Shoemaker: "Sleep is half my training."

Consider those factors crucial for athletic success. All physical activity requires an adequate supply of chemical energy from the body. Chronic sleep loss leads to a 30-40% reduction in glucose metabolism, and significantly reduces the amount of time it takes for an athlete to reach the point of physical exhaustion. Overall physical strength, as well as speed, also takes a big hit after repeated days of inadequate sleep.

Athletic activity depletes the body of energy and breaks down muscle tissue. Sleep replenishes the tired body, preparing it for the next expenditure of energy. But sleep deprivation has been shown to decrease the production of glycogen and carbohydrates that are stored for use during physical activity.

Perhaps equally important, sports demand attention and concentration – two factors that are seriously impacted by poor or restricted sleep. Numerous research studies confirm that inadequate sleep affects reaction time, accuracy, and memory --- all critical ingredients for success in your sport.

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Game Plan for Optimal Sleep

- Balance your work, school, social, and training schedule to allow for adequate time in bed
- Obtain 8 or more hours of sleep per night
- Maintain a regular sleep/wake schedule
- Avoid wide swings in bedtimes and wake times on weekends
- Avoid over-the-counter sleep medications that can leave you tired and sluggish the next day
- Reduce your consumption of alcohol and caffeine
- Turn off your cell phone during your nighttime sleep
- Maintain a sleeping environment that is dark, quiet and cool
- Stop all vigorous physical activity at least 3 hours before bedtime
- Avoid bright lights, computers, and video games during the pre-sleep period
- Carve a time slot prior to bedtime for calm activities and relaxation

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