



Athletic Performance and Sleep

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Now that school and fall athletics have started, student-athletes have to find time to eat, study and sleep around their busy athletic schedule. Early morning and late night games and practices wreak havoc on an athlete's sleep schedule. Especially when they have to find time to do their homework and get up early for school. Studies have shown that falling behind on sleep can decrease an athlete's cardiovascular performance by 11%. This is a significant amount and can have a very visible effect on an athlete's overall performance including decision-making during their sporting activity. Premature and excessive fatigue can also significantly increase the risk of injury.

Signs of inadequate sleep to watch for:

- 1) Regularly needing an alarm clock to wake up.
- 2) Catching up on sleep during the weekends, feeling tired most mornings.
- 3) Feeling lethargic/slow during the day.
- 4) Taking frequent naps.
- 5) Frequently falling asleep when given a sleep opportunity.
- 6) Sleeping 9.5 hours or more when you can get it.

If 2 or more of these apply to an athlete, then he/she is more than likely not getting enough sleep and his/her performance in sports and school are likely suffering.

Tips for restoring adequate sleep time:

- 1) For 1 week, establish a set bedtime where the athlete can get 10 hours of uninterrupted sleep (the athlete must go to bed within 30 minutes of established bedtime).
- 2) Maintain a regular consistent sleep schedule where the athlete goes to bed within 30 minutes of an established time and is able to wake up by a desired time without needing an alarm clock.
- 3) Create an optimal sleeping environment that is dark, quiet, cool and comfortable.

Once an athlete is able to catch up on his/her sleep, they should notice a significant improvement in endurance, performance, and decision-making.