

Train like an athlete, Eat like an nutritionist, Sleep like a baby, WIN like a Champion....

Rest: The Hidden Benefits



The human body is a fantastic machine that allows us to do a mind-boggling range of things. It can be extremely flexible or extremely brittle, it heals itself, whether after cuts or bone breaks, and it moves us from one place to another at varying rates of speed.

In truth, for most of us going through our daily tasks, our bodies are likely to be operating well below full capacity. Either we are inadequately fueled from the combination of foods and nutrients that we take in or we have not given our bodies the

right amount of rest and recovery time that it needs to be at 100%. For the majority of us humans of all ages and nations, operating at full capacity is not necessary for us to complete whatever tasks we are doing for the day, although it would make things much easier.

For athletes, though, it is a different story. A body functioning at its optimum level is quite a sight to behold and is one of the most underrated aspects of athletic success across all sports. Despite this importance, it is still common for younger athletes to neglect some of the necessities of maintaining their body, with rest being one of the easiest things to sacrifice.

Teenagers and Sleep

Sleep is especially important for all teenagers due to the growth their bodies are undergoing. For teenagers who are physically active and taking part in sports on a regular basis, especially at a high level, this is doubly so. With the extra stress being placed on the body through training and games, resting in the right ways is important to speed up the recovery process.



For high school athletes, there is a major chunk of time unavailable to facilitate rest because going to class and earning good grades are also priorities. For this reason, it is absolutely important that you are balancing your time well. You have to be able to attend school, practice or compete in games, do homework and study, and also spend time relaxing with family and friends. This is why sleep is usually something that is sacrificed. It is recommended by the [National Sleep](#)

[Foundation](#) that teenagers get **9¼ hours** of sleep per night. How often do you think you have gotten this much sleep?

Rest and Injury



Without enough rest, teenage athletes put themselves at a greater risk for injury, with one recent study in California recording a 57% injury rate for student-athletes getting less than 8 hours of sleep per night over the 21-month period covered by the study. 38% of the participants in the study reported multiple injuries during the period.

This study also found that there was little correlation between injury rate and whether the athlete had periods of inactivity throughout the year, noting sleep

as the biggest predictor of injuries. This is one of the first studies to focus on high school athletes, and the outcome is consistent with the previous evidence regarding decreased motor function in adults due to sleep deprivation as well as the body's heightened need for recovery time during the teenage years.

Rest Affecting Performance

Athletes experiencing sleep deprivation will also have a harder time in training sessions as well as in competitive games. They may feel lethargic, which will affect their ability to learn and/or execute technical and tactical functions as needed, whether in drills or actual play. It also affects things such as balance, hand-eye coordination, and reaction time. This can be the difference between beating a defender rather than committing a turnover, saving a shot or letting a goal in, hitting a pitch for a foul or a base hit, or whatever other action is applicable to the sport you progress.

A recent study saw that collegiate athletes at Stanford University who increased their sleep hours to 10 per night recorded tangible increases in performance levels such as sprinting and reaction time, showing that sleep is an important, natural performance enhancer.



Risks of Insufficient Sleep



Sleep deprivation leads to fatigue, which is not only important in injury prevention and optimizing performance, but also has other negative effects. One of these includes depression, which can be compounded by the stress experienced by teenagers with school commitments as well as maintaining various relationships.

Lack of sleep has also been shown to impair cognitive function, which makes it crucial in maintaining academic performance. This is especially important as student-athletes look towards college, whether they plan to compete athletically at that level or not.

Tips to Prioritize Rest

Due to the fact that rest is so important in making sure you reach your best level as an athlete, there are a number of steps you can take in order to ensure you are getting enough.

- Make a schedule to ensure you get all your schoolwork done, have some free time, and get enough rest. Stick to that schedule.
- Go to sleep at a consistent time every night, including weekends.
- Avoid caffeine, especially in the later hours of the day and at night, when it can affect your ability to fall asleep.
- Develop healthy ways to navigate stress (yoga, meditation, workouts, etc.).
- If you have time during the day, take a short nap to re-energize.

Happy sleeping.....