

Sleep & Sports Performance

How a good night's sleep can improve your athletic attributes

Weight control

Being in-shape is key to performance, and the numerous studies into sleep deprivation and obesity have established a link between the two – those who sleep the least tend to be more obese. Sleeping well makes eating the right foods a much easier task – lack of sleep increases cravings for high-calorie junk food, as well as decreasing how much your lifestyle dictates your weight, as opposed to your genetics.

Decision making

During sleep, memory consolidation occurs, which essentially is the process of turning newly-acquired information into permanent long-term memories. Sleeping well after training ensures that the simulations carried out during practice become ingrained in your overall ability, thus improving your split-second subconscious decisions during a competitive event.

Reaction time

NASA found that the alertness of their pilots improved by 54%, and their overall performance by 34% in the hours following a 26 minute nap, which NASA also identified as being the optimum nap duration.

Motivation

There is a positive correlation between sleep quality and proneness to anxiety and depression. Being motivated is the first step on the journey to peak athletic condition, and sleeping well can help avoid giving up on a strict training regime.

Stamina

The quality of your night's sleep can significantly influence your physical and mental energy levels the next day – research¹ shows that the perceived level of physical exertion during exercise significantly increases when subjects are sleep deprived, decreasing one's capability to push themselves to the maximum.

Accuracy

Research carried out by the University of Stanford found that when their women's tennis team extended their sleeping time to ten hours per night for five weeks, they were able to hit more accurate tennis shots, as well as improving their sprint times.

Recovery

Sleep facilitates the production of human growth hormone (HGH) which repairs damaged muscles. Getting a good night's sleep allows your body to fully recover from a work-out or training, maximising your preparedness for the next day's exercising and helping to alleviate any potential injury problems. Netherlands star Wesley Sneijder believes that some of his teammates' injuries have been due to inadequate sleep, and that sleep has been a key to consistency for him.



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