

TRAINING TIP OF THE WEEK

SLEEP: THE GREAT ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE ENHANCER

While on-field, sport-specific training is essential to excel in athletics, the difference maker between finishing in first or second may be how well the athlete slept in the days prior to the event. Studies show that adolescents need 8-9 hours of sleep per night for optimal athletic performance and that most teens are chronically sleep deprived. Insufficient sleep leads to decreased reaction time, slower performance, and longer recovery periods after exercise. Adequate sleep helps an athlete store more glycogen in their muscles, which the body uses for energy during exertion and also helps regulate human growth hormone and cortisol which are important in healing muscles after activity. In a study of Stanford University basketball players and swimmers, their sprint times decreased when their sleep increased from 7-8 hours to 8-9 hours per night. A little tip for those athletes that love a good nap to rest up before the big game; limit the nap to less than 30 minutes and no closer than 2 hours before competition. Longer naps or ones closer to the event can cause sleep inertia, meaning that you'll still be groggy which can impair performance even more than sleep deprivation.



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