THE VALUE OF SLEEP

Sources: National Collegiate Athletic Association; American College Health Association
Infographic: National Athletic Trainers' Association

Sleep supports health and daily function, especially for student athletes who need peak physical and mental performance.



SLEEP SHAPES COGNITIVE FUNCTION:

- Learning and memory: As you sleep, your mind filters, sorts, assesses, consolidates and integrates the day's information.
- Decision-making: Sleep loss impairs decisions and clouds judgment, so you may not realize that your choices are affected.
- Vigilance and alertness: Sleep loss reduces focus and sustained attention. As with poor judgment, people lacking sleep often do not recognize this decline in their own abilities.

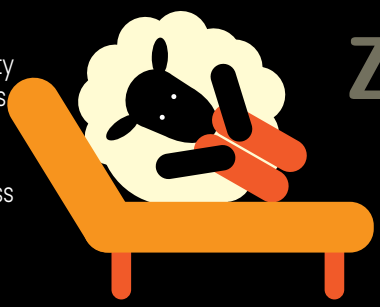


SLEEP AND PHYSICAL HEALTH:

- Healing and recovery: During sleep, cells grow, repair and rebuild, aiding athletic performance and injury prevention.
- Metabolism: Sleep regulates insulin and glucose, metabolic hormone release, and how fat and muscle cells store and use energy.
- Muscle growth: Repair during sleep is vital to growing muscles. Sleep also regulates human growth hormone.
- Weight control: Poor-quality, brief or poorly timed sleep that conflicts with internal rhythms can cause weight gain and obesity, especially in teens and young adults, whose sleep needs are greater.

SLEEP AND MENTAL HEALTH:

- Stress and anxiety: Sleep helps the body regulate stress and emotions. Without enough sleep, the body has more difficulty processing stressful events, and emotions can become harder to manage and keep under control.
- Mood and depression: Sleep helps process and regulate emotions, creating a close connection between too little sleep and depression.



SLEEP LOSS IN STUDENT ATHLETES

On average, most college-aged student athletes get too little sleep on four nights each week.

One in three college-aged student athletes sleeps under seven hours nightly; the rate is higher among female athletes.

Common causes of sleep loss among college-aged student athletes include frequent competition travel, uncomfortable sleep settings, stress, balancing sports with academics and campus life, and sleep disorders such as insomnia or sleep apnea.

HAVING TROUBLE SLEEPING?

Eight hours of sleep is recommended for ages 17-22 to support optimal health and function. To improve rest, make your sleep space cool, dark and comfortable. Clear away distractions such as electronics, bright lights and noise to create an ideal setting for sleep.

Talk with your health care provider if you have trouble sleeping or suspect that you have a sleep disorder.