

What is the purpose of sleep?

- Sleep is an important component in the preparation for, and recovery from, strenuous exercise. Sleep is one of the most efficacious recovery strategies available due to its physiological and restorative effects. Obtaining sufficient sleep can aid reaction time, coordination, concentration, memory, motivation, mood and performance. Sleep also aids the repair and regeneration of muscles and tissues

How much sleep is needed?

- Sleep is individual
- Most people need between 7-8h of sleep each day to function effectively
- We still don't know exactly how much sleep elite athletes need, however research indicates that people who undertake high levels of strenuous exercise need more sleep than normal (i.e. more than 7-8h per day)

What factors may contribute to poor sleep in athletes?

- Poor routines from varying training and competition schedules (i.e. early morning training or night competition)
- Muscle soreness, pain or injury
- Psychological stress and/or anxiety about competition or other lifestyle factors
- Frequent travel across time zones
- The use of computers, television, video games prior to sleep
- Change of sleeping environment and excessive noise
- Excess consumption of food based stimulants like caffeine. Especially after midday.

Is napping a good idea?

- Studies have shown a nap can be an effective tool for athletes if used correctly
- A short nap can improve alertness and performance during the day, especially if night-time sleep has been restricted or interrupted
- Do not nap too long. Aim for no longer than an hour
- If the nap is too long, it may interfere with the main sleep later
- An athlete may feel lethargic if sleep is too long. You should aim for at least 30 min to an hour after waking before starting training.



Practical Sleep Recommendations

Bedroom The bedroom should be cool (21°C is best), dark, quiet and a comfortable. The bed and pillows used is important

Routine

- Create a good sleep routine by going to bed at the same time and waking up at the same time
- Before bed routine can help the body prepare for sleep. The routine should start about 30min before bedtime. i.e. clean teeth, read a book etc.

Electronics Avoid watching television in bed and using the computer in bed. These can steal sleep time and form bad habits

Avoid watching the clock. Many people who struggle with sleep tend to watch the clock too much. Frequently checking the clock during the night can wake you up (especially if you turn on the light to read the time) and may reinforce negative thoughts

Get up & try again If you haven't been able to get to sleep after about 20 minutes or more, get up and do something calming or boring until you feel sleepy, then return to bed and try again. Sit quietly on the couch with the lights off (bright light will tell your brain that it is time to wake up)

Food and Fluid

- Avoid the use of caffeinated food and fluids later in the day. See http://www.ausport.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/469650/Caffeine_11-website_fact_sheet.pdf for a list of caffeine containing foods and fluids
- Do not go to bed after consuming too much fluid, this may result in waking up to use the bathroom

Be Organised Utilise a 'to-do' list or diary to ensure organisation and unnecessary over-thinking whilst trying to sleep

Relax Investigate relaxation/breathing techniques - talk to your Sport Psychologist

If you continue to experience sleep difficulties please make an appointment to see a sports psychologist, recovery physiologist and/or sports physician.