



SPORT SCIENCE
INSTITUTE™

SLEEP AND WELLNESS FOR COLLEGIATE ATHLETES

WHY does sleep matter for collegiate athletes?

Athletic performance ▶ Poor sleep is associated with delayed response time, fatigue and poor decision-making.

Injury risk and recovery ▶ Athletes who are sleep deprived have an elevated risk of musculoskeletal injury and delayed recovery following injuries.

Academic performance ▶ Sleep deprivation impairs cognitive performance and is linked to lower GPA.

Mental health ▶ Inadequate sleep increases the risk for mental health symptoms and disorders, and mental health symptoms and disorders may reduce sleep quality and quantity.

Are student-athletes getting *ENOUGH* sleep?

On average, in-season student-athletes are getting **6.27 hours of sleep nightly**¹ while 8 hours of sleep are recommended.

61% of student-athletes report daytime fatigue at least three or more days in the past week², while 19% of male and 23% of female student-athletes reported difficulty sleeping at least eight of the past 30 days¹.



WHAT are recommendations for restorative sleep?

1. **Try to maintain a regular sleep schedule**, including on weekends. If this is not possible, establish a bedtime routine that can be practiced regularly.
2. **Seek bright light during the day**, especially in the morning, and try to **avoid bright and blue light at night**. This is especially important later at night, when bright and blue light can further delay sleep onset.
3. The **bedroom should be cool** (less than 68 degrees), dark and comfortable.
4. **Caffeine** (e.g., coffee, energy drinks and certain types of sodas and teas) **should be avoided at least six hours before bedtime**. Nicotine is also a stimulant and should be avoided. Alcohol may reduce time to fall asleep, but it can adversely impact sleep quality and should be avoided close to bedtime.
5. Consumption of **excessive food and liquids at night should be avoided**, as these may disrupt sleep.
6. **Avoid obsessive clock watching**. Often, looking at the clock at night can increase mental activity and anxiety, and make resuming sleep more difficult.
7. Individuals who have difficulty falling asleep should **generally avoid naps**. However, sleep-deprived individuals may find that short-duration napping during the day may improve performance and functioning.
8. **Beds should be used for sleep-related activities only**. Other activities such as reading and watching TV, especially if lying awake and unable to sleep, should be done out of the bed. Those who have difficulty falling asleep should get out of bed for a period of time and try again later. This practice (called stimulus control) is supported by strong evidence that it will help prevent insomnia and improve sleep quality over time.

¹ NCAA. NCAA GOALS Study, 2015 [data file]. Indianapolis: IN: NCAA, (2016-01-05).

² American College Health Association. *American College Health Association-National College Health Assessment, Fall 2015, Spring 2016, Fall 2016, Spring 2017, Fall 2017* [data file]. Hanover, MD: American College Health Association [producer and distributor], (2018-11-15).

