

## Sleep, Athletic Performance, and Recovery

Many of the world's greatest athletes live and breathe the sport they love. One of the key elements of being able to perform well in their sport requires a conscious effort to maintain healthy sleep routine.

**The quality and quantity of sleep athletes receive is often the key to winning.** REM sleep in particular provides energy to both the brain and body. If sleep is cut short, the body doesn't have time to repair muscles, consolidate memory, and release hormones.

Tennis great, Serena Williams, told a UK publication that she usually sleeps well and enjoys going to bed early around 7 p.m. On the website of cyclist Lance Armstrong is a LiveStrong dare to get six to eight hours of sleep to improve mood, performance, and concentration.

A study in the journal *SLEEP* confirms the role of sleep in performance, with results that show declines in split-second decision making following poor sleep. Results also showed increased accuracy in well-rested subjects.

Exercise depletes energy, fluids, and breaks down

muscle. Hydration and the right fuel are only part of training and recovery. What athletes do in the moments during and immediately after competition also determines how quickly their bodies rebuild muscle and replenish nutrients. This helps maintain endurance, speed, and accuracy.

Some research suggests that sleep deprivation increases levels of the stress hormone, cortisol.

Sleep deprivation has also been seen to decrease production of glycogen and carbohydrates that are stored for energy use during physical activity. In short, less sleep increases the possibility of [fatigue](#), low energy, and poor focus at game time. It may also slow recovery post-game.

Whether you're at the top of your game or in the game for the fun of it, getting the proper amount of sleep is necessary to face the world with your best food forward. Sleep will help you while on the road to good fitness, good eating, and good health.

*Source: National Sleep Foundation  
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