

PRESS RELEASE

How sleep affects sporting performance

12 September 2015, Johannesburg: Sportsmen and women have plenty pressures to deal with, and sleep is often one of them. The quality and amount of sleep plays a major role in any athlete's performance. Circumstances such as a poor bed, anxiety and disturbed rest can negatively affect an athlete's mood, performance, concentration and accuracy. Linda Breedt, from leading bed retailer, Sleepmasters, explains the effects of sleep deprivation on sporting performance and shares a few simple ways to get the best night's sleep.

The effects of sleep deprivation

“There are several reasons why athletes may have a tough time getting a good night's rest when competing,” explains Linda. She notes how it can vary from the intake of stimulants or alcohol, an overly full training schedule, the anxiety or excitement associated with the competition, right down to an uncomfortable bed. “The type of base set that you sleep on plays a major role in determining the quality of sleep that you enjoy. As one of the leading bedding experts, Sleepmasters provides customers with an informative shopping experience that enables them to choose the right mattress and ultimately get a better night's sleep.”

Strenuous exercise depletes the body, so what athletes do before and after a competition has a direct influence on their endurance, speed, and accuracy. Research has shown that sleep deprivation has negative effects on performance and ultimately competitive results. “If the average of six to eight hours of sleep a night is cut short, the body doesn't have time to repair muscle, consolidate memory, replenish nutrients, and release hormones,” explains Linda. Here are a few other consequences of poor sleep:

- Increased levels of the stress hormone cortisol
- Low energy and mental and physical fatigue
- Poor concentration at game time
- Slow recovery post-game
- Declines in split-second decision making
- Irritability and poor mood
- Loss of motivation
- Decreased production of glycogen and carbohydrates that are stored for energy use during physical activity
- Lower pain tolerance

Practical tips to improve your quality of sleep

Sleep is essential to restoring physiological and cognitive functions. Here Linda shares her tips to help you get a good night's rest:

- **Get into a rhythm**
A disturbed sleep cycle as a result of going to bed too late or having an irregular routine can lead to greater drowsiness, so it is essential to adopt habits that will encourage the onset of sleep. Routines vary from individual to individual. What's important is that you create one and stick to it.
- **Consider the condition of your current bed**
“Investing in a new base set from Sleepmasters will ensure the best night's sleep,” suggests Linda. Sleepmasters stores feature a “Comfort Zone” where customers can test the comfort level that suits their body – they can choose from Firm, Gentle or Plush. Once you've discovered your comfort level, move on and choose your preferred brand within the selected comfort level. After that, simply select the base set size that best fits your needs and arrange payment and delivery.
- **Treat anxiety**
Consider investing in a few sports psychology sessions with a professional who specialises in this field. Addressing your anxiety and finding the correct coping mechanisms can go a long way to help athletes perform better.
- **Avoid stimulants**
Caffeine, whether from coffee, tea, soft drinks or energy drinks, can be detrimental to a good night's rest. Limit your overall caffeine consumption, and make a rule of not having any caffeine after 6pm.
Limit alcohol intake
Whilst the consumption of alcohol may help the onset of sleep, it significantly reduces the duration of deep sleep, an essential phase when recovery takes place. In addition, the effects of alcohol persist long after it has been fully metabolised by the body. She advises limiting alcohol consumption during intense training or before a competition.
- **Rehydrate regularly**
Many athletes are in the habit of consuming large amounts of water towards the end of a day to offset dehydration caused by sweating. Whilst rehydration is essential, the urge to urinate can keep you up at night. Ideally athletes should rehydrate regularly throughout the day, rather than trying to compensate for loss of water in one fell swoop.
- **Eat right**
Research has shown a link between nutrition and sleep. Sleep deprived individuals tend to eat poorly, and are more likely to eat energy-dense foods that cause energy spikes and dips. Being conscious of what food you put into your body will ultimately help your sporting performance.

The more sports enthusiasts and professionals know about the impacts of sleep, the better they can adjust their life to getting the adequate amount and quality, ultimately helping them on the road to overall wellbeing.

Visit www.sleepmasters.co.za to shop online or to find a Sleepmasters store closest to you, or call them on 0800 222 888.

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