

BELLA VISTA HIGH SCHOOL

TRACK AND FIELD

The Importance Of Sleep

Sleep: The Immune System Protector

When hard-training athletes do not get sufficient rest and recovery from their exercise sessions, they run the risk of becoming overly fatigued and listless. They may also experience difficulty sleeping and become more susceptible to getting colds and other illnesses.

Getting the right amount of sleep allows the body to rest and rebuild itself for the next day's activities. Think of your body like a car. If you don't take the time to refuel your vehicle, eventually it will sputter and completely stop.

By not getting sufficient rest, your body's immune system will sputter and not work at full capacity, which makes you more likely to become ill with a cold or flu. A good deep sleep allows our body to release a significant amount of growth hormone, which boosts the immune system and aids in the growth and repair of the body.

It's recommended that you get 7-9 hours of sleep a night to keep your body working at full speed. According to the Sleep Foundation, if you do not get enough sleep each night, your body will eventually "accumulate a sleep debt that can be difficult to "pay back" if it becomes too big." The resulting sleep debt can make you more vulnerable to viruses and germs.

If it takes less than five minutes for you to fall asleep each night, you are sleep deprived. Between 10 -15 minutes is the ideal about of time it should take you to fall asleep. If you are zonked once your head hits the pillow, you need to get more sleep! Overall, sleep is a crucial weapon against the cold and flu. Your body needs it to survive and keep illnesses at bay. Its cheap, easy and most of all very relaxing.

Sleep Tips For Teens From The National Sleep Foundation:

1. Sleep is food for the brain: Get enough of it, and get it when you need it. Even mild sleepiness can hurt your performance -- from taking school exams to playing sports or video games. Lack of sleep can make you look tired and feel depressed, irritable, and angry.
2. Keep consistency in mind: Establish a regular bedtime and waketime schedule, and maintain it during weekends and school (or work) vacations. Don't stray from your schedule frequently, and never do so for two or more consecutive nights. If you must go off schedule, avoid delaying your bedtime by more than one hour, awaken the next day within two hours of your regular schedule, and, if you are sleepy during the day, take an early afternoon nap.

3. Learn how much sleep you need to function at your best. You should awaken refreshed, not tired. Most adolescents need between 8.5 and 9.25 hours of sleep each night. Know when you need to get up in the morning, then calculate when you need to go to sleep to get at least 8.5 hours of sleep a night.
4. Get into bright light as soon as possible in the morning, but avoid it in the evening. The light helps to signal to the brain when it should wake up and when it should prepare to sleep.
5. Understand your circadian rhythm. Then, you can try to maximize your schedule throughout the day according to your internal clock. For example, to compensate for your "slump (sleepy) times," participate in stimulating activities or classes that are interactive, and avoid lecture classes or potentially unsafe activities, including driving.
6. After lunch (or after noon), stay away from coffee, colas with caffeine, and nicotine, which are all stimulants. Also avoid alcohol, which disrupts sleep.
7. Relax before going to bed. Avoid heavy reading, studying, and computer games within one hour of going to bed. Don't fall asleep with the television on -- flickering light and stimulating content can inhibit restful sleep. If you work during the week, try to avoid working night hours. If you work until 9:30 pm, for example, you will still need to plan time to unwind before going to sleep.
8. Say no to all-nighters. Staying up late can cause chaos to your sleep patterns and your ability to be alert the next day ... and beyond. Remember, the best thing you can do to prepare for a test is to get plenty of sleep. All nighters or late-night study sessions might seem to give you more time to cram for your exam, but they are also likely to drain your brainpower.