

The Role of Rest and Recovery

Training young athletes involves balancing the demand of practice and competition with the need for rest and recovery. It is not uncommon for high school athletes to participate in sports practice four or five days per week, compete once or twice per week, and strength train two or three days per week. The importance of active rest and recovery is commonly undervalued or misunderstood. Since adolescents are still growing and developing, youth may actually need more time than adults for recovery between high-intensity training sessions.

Here are some tips to help even the highest achievers get the recovery time they need in order to perform their best at game time:

- Be sure to get 8 ½ - 9 hours of sleep every night. Most teens are sleep deprived and chronically tired.
- Eliminate or strictly limit intake of caffeine. Caffeine affects sleep patterns and circadian rhythms that allow us to naturally fall asleep.
- Excessive cell phone and text messaging (>15 times per day) has been linked to irregular sleeping hours and more sleep disruptions. Know when to turn your cell phone OFF and decrease the pressure to constantly keep in touch.
- Train hard on your harder practice or game days and recover hard on your less intense training days. Coaches should take into consideration the season game schedule when planning practice schedules. Athletes commonly go light on hard days and hard on the easier days – this self structure disallows you to be at your best on event day.
- Plan to take at least one day off from strenuous physical activity per week during the regular season. This allows your body to recover from any minor injuries, muscle soreness, joint stress and mental pressures.
- Avoid participating in two high level sports during the same season. Being part of a varsity or JV team while also involved in a traveling sport doesn't do justice to either team, nor does it allow your body to recover as needed. Being in three sports *throughout* the calendar year allows you optimum performance for the sport currently in season.

Listen to your body when you feel any sharp or worsening pain. Pushing through this sort of pain can lead to more serious injury that can sideline you longer than you bargained for.

To find a qualified sports medicine physician, visit www.mnsportsmed.org.

Minnesota Sports Medicine, MSM, is a network of sports and orthopedic physicians who treat athletes at medical clinics throughout the Twin Cities metro area. For more information about MSM, call 612-273-4800.