

ADOLESCENT HEALTH & NUTRITION

4 keys to better mental and physical performance



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My focus here is on youth athletes as they are a large part of the population we work with every week. Although the rules here apply to any adolescent regardless of their extra circulars.

In our time training athletes, being former athletes, and listening/observing athletes there are a few simple things that are holding them back from being their best.

1. Sleep Habits
2. Exercise outside of practice
3. Nutrition & Hydration
4. Social & Mental Health

My goal here is to provide simple lifestyle modifications that will take your performance to the next level.

Sleep Habits

Inadequate or poor sleep will:

- Decrease your ability to recover from training sessions and leave you more likely to become injured.
- Decrease your speed, strength, and reaction times.
- Decrease cognitive performance both in the classroom and in your sport.
- Decrease your ability to handle stress, control your emotions, and feel happy.

As an athlete who wants to perform your best both academically and physically, you must take your sleep seriously. Here are three things I want you to focus on to improve your sleep:

1. 8-10 hours of sleep every night
2. Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day
3. No blue light (phones, TVs, overhead lights) for an hour before bed.

If you can follow these simple behavior changes you will find that you have more energy for classes and practice as well as an improved sense of well-being throughout your day.

Exercise Outside of Sports

Being a strength and conditioning coach I have a strong desire to help athletes reach their fullest physical potential. I find that many athletes are not creating the time to improve their physical performance outside of practice. Athletes should be training in some capacity year-round.

Taking the time to develop yourself through S&C will directly improve your performance on the field by:

- Decreasing injury risk
- Maintaining physical performance between seasons
- Increasing Athletic Potential (Vertical, Speed, Absolute Strength, Conditioning)

S&C decreases injury risk by strengthening your tissues (muscles, bones, ligaments, and tendons) in a way that's not possible through playing sports alone. Training also allows you a chance to balance activities in your sport. For example, many throwing athletes develop issues with their shoulders and back due to a lack of movement that opposes the repetitive nature of throwing. With proper S&C athletes can avoid many of the common aches and pains.

Athletes who find value and passion in training outside of their desired sport will also have an easier time transitioning out of sports while still maintaining their health and fitness.

Every athlete has a different starting point and demands on their body due to their specific sport or position, therefore, working one-on-one with a strength and conditioning coach will be best for you to determine an appropriate amount of training.

Nutrition & Hydration

As teenagers, you often have more freedom to make your own decisions around nutrition. School lunches, fast food runs, concession stand snacks, and anything else quick and cheap. I again want to come back to my point about athletes needing their bodies to perform at the highest level.

Let's use a sports car as an example, if you have a top-of-the-line car and you know it runs best on premium gasoline would you settle for oil and water you found in a can in the barn? Or would you take the time to get the fuel you needed?

Whether or not a sports car example resonates with you you must understand that when you feed yourself quick and easy food you are directly sabotaging your performance. Food Is Fuel and the human body runs best on whole foods not processed food products.

Athletes need fuel and a lot of it.

- 1 gram of protein per pound of body weight every day
- 1-2 servings of healthy fats at each meal
- 2-3 servings of Carbs and Fruit at each meal
- 1/2 your body weight in ounces of water each day

Athletes do not need

- to skip meals before games or long practices
- eat processed food products
- drink sugar drinks

Social Media & Mental Health

The last area I want to focus on is that of social and mental health. I think in large part this area is overlooked with today's youth. The further we have traveled down the road of technology and poor health the more our younger generations have suffered.

As social creatures, we need to have quality relationships with peers. Team sports and school are great places for kids to develop these relationships, however, in my opinion, social media is a low-quality place to develop these relationships. Social media and the internet if used appropriately can be a great place full of information and creativity but we must set boundaries and intentions when we interact with these mediums.

Here are a few things I wish someone would have told me while I was in high school:

- Focus more on what is important to your future (What are you passionate about? What are you excited to learn about?)
- Focus less on what others are claiming to do with their life (Social Media is not real life)
- Being involved in meaningless drama doesn't serve your prosperity as a human
- Only put effort into those who bring positivity into your life

Take-Home Messages

Improve your sleep habits

Develop a consistent strength and conditioning routine (work with a qualified coach)

Remember that food is fuel and your performance depends on your food choices

Take pride in your positivity and well being while finding others who wish to do the same

If you choose to implement the habits I have described above I can promise you will be on your way to better performance.

This is the foundation for not only the person you are today but the optimal human you wish to be in the future. If you need more information or would like to set up a consultation do not hesitate to reach out!

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