

Monitoring Athlete Health- Overtraining, Sleep and the Immune System

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Illness in athletes affects their ability to both perform and train. Through training periods the prevalence of illness is estimated at 4-7%. During the Summer and Winter Olympic Games the prevalence of illness is approximately 7% with studies recommending preventive strategies targeting the greatest risks. The most prevalent system to be affected is the respiratory system with incidence ranging from 41-63% of illness presentations.

Sleep is essential for the athlete's performance, recovery and well-being. Many athletes exhibit significant sleep abnormalities with prevalence of poor sleep of up to 85%. For some athletes the problem is related to early morning training times (resulting in a similar sleep pattern to shift workers), poor sleep hygiene, and the impact of training load and of injury. For other athletes, sleep abnormalities manifest as an inability to sleep after competition. Anecdotal evidence indicates a small positive relationship between sleep, illness and injury.

Training monitoring and load management are important aspects of both preparing athletes for optimal performance and preventing illness. Methods of monitoring training, sleep and wellness during training and competition and links to illness prevention will be discussed.

Key words: Illness, Overtraining, Immune System

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