

64%

of athletes indicated worse sleep on at least one occasion in the nights prior to an important competition over the past 12 months

82%

of athletes report problems falling asleep before a competition

59%

of team sport athletes reported having no strategy to overcome poor sleep



1 STAY OUT OF YOUR HEAD

The key to getting back to sleep is continuing to cue your body for sleep, so remain in bed in a relaxed position. Hard as it may be, try not to stress over the fact that you're awake or your inability to fall asleep again, because that very stress and anxiety encourages your body to stay awake. A good way to stay out of your head is to focus on the feelings and sensations in your body.



2 MAKE RELAXATION YOUR GOAL, NOT SLEEP

If you are finding it hard to fall back asleep, try a relaxation technique such as visualization, deep breathing, or meditation, which can be done without even getting out of bed. Remind yourself that although they're not a replacement for sleep, rest and relaxation still help rejuvenate your body.

3 DO A QUIET, NON-STIMULATING ACTIVITY

If you've been awake for more than 15 minutes, try getting out of bed and doing a quiet, non-stimulating activity, such as reading a book.



4 AVOID SOURCES OF BRIGHT LIGHT

Keep the lights dim so as not to cue your body clock that it's time to wake up. Also avoid screens of any kind—computers, TV, cell phones—as the type of light they emit is stimulating to the brain. A light snack or herbal tea might help relax you, but be careful not to eat so much that your body begins to expect a meal at that time of the day.



References:

Juliff et al. J Sci Med Sport 2014
Le Meur et al. Sleep and athletic performance, in Recovery for Performance in Sport, HK 2014