Sleep may make the difference for athletes

By Gordy Megroz, Outside

For my 40th birthday, I decided to climb the Grand Teton, a 13,770-foot peak in my backyard of Jackson, Wyoming. The Grand is technical, requiring rock climbing and rappels on exposed faces with 5,000-foot drops. Make a mistake and you're dead. I'd decided the ascent would help me feel less 40. I gathered the gear I needed and did all the necessary training, including steep, hourlong hikes wearing a 60-pound weight vest. The one thing I was missing to perform at my best? Enough sleep.

If you're like me, work and life prevent adequate time to snooze. That's bad. Besides weakening your immune system (a recent study shows that getting only six hours of sleep a night makes you four times more likely to catch a cold, compared with those who get more than seven), not getting enough rest can sabotage athleticism.

A study in Sports Medicine determined that inadequate sleep results in decreased motor skills and cognitive function, as well as increased inflammation—symptoms similar to overtraining.

Conversely, researchers at Stanford University found that when the school's basketball players got 10 hours of sleep each night, their shooting accuracy improved by 9 percent.

Read the whole story