

Things Coaches Should Know about Eating Disorders & Athletes

1. Recognize the signs and symptoms of eating disorders. These can be found on the backside of this flyer.
2. Take warning signs and disordered eating behaviors seriously because there is a 10-15% mortality and a 25% suicide rate for those who develop eating disorders.
3. Emphasize improving performance through enhancing strength training and physical conditioning, creating/maintaining a well balanced athletic diet, as well as mental and emotional capacities rather than weight loss.
4. Eating disorders happen in both male and female athletes. Both male and female athletes are at higher risk of developing an eating disorder than other males and females.
5. Provide athletes with accurate information regarding weight loss, body composition, nutrition, and sports performance.
6. Tell your athletes and fellow coaches about the health risks of low body weight (e.g., Stress fractures, osteoporosis, infertility).
7. Refer an athlete who is chronically dieting or engaging in abnormal eating to a sport psychologist or therapist skilled in treating eating disorders. Early detection improves chances of successful treatment.
8. Do not assume reducing body fat or weight leads to enhanced performance. Studies show this is not the case with all athletes and some athletes respond to weight loss attempts with eating disorder behaviors.
9. Understand that weight can be a sensitive and personal issue for many athletes so be aware that your words can either positively or negatively influence an athlete.
10. Do not stop an athlete's sport participation unless it is recommended by a medical professional.
11. Know how your own values and attitudes regarding weight influence your interactions with your athletes.
12. Improved Performance should not be at the expense of the athlete's health.

Contact Katie Cougevan (Director of Eating Disorders), Ross Flowers (Director of Sport Psychology), or Heather Peters (Sport Psych & Eating Disorders Postdoctoral Fellow) at CAPS 530-752-0871 for more information or a confidential consult.

●Anorexia Nervosa

- Resistance to maintain body weight at or above a minimally normal weight for age and height
- Intense fear of weight gain or being “fat”
- Disturbance in thoughts about body weight and shape
- Loss of menstrual periods

●Bulimia Nervosa

- Regular intake of large amounts of food while feeling a sense of loss of control
- Using inappropriate compensatory behaviors (throwing up, laxatives, restrict eating, over exercising, enemas).
- Extreme concern about body weight and shape

●Binge Eating Disorder

- Frequent episodes of eating large quantities of food in short period of time
- Feeling out of control over eating behavior
- Feeling ashamed

●Eating Disorder NOS

- Fitness Disorder- “people who are controlling their bodies, altering their moods and defining themselves through their over involvement in exercise activity, where instead of choosing to participate in their activity, they have become “addicted” to it” (Costin, 1999)
- Do you engage in excessive exercise routines?
 - Do you work out extra after practice
- Do you have thoughts like these?
 - If I don't run, I can't eat*
 - Not exercising means I am lazy*
 - If I don't work out today, I will gain weight*
 - I don't care about the consequences, I have to work out or I'll get fat, hate myself, and fall apart*