

Warning Signs

The symptoms of eating disorders in athletes are often interpreted as athletic burn out.

- Compulsive, excessive exercise outside of routine training periods.
- Complaining of always being cold.
- Dissatisfaction with own sporting performance.
- Chronic fatigue, fainting, light-headedness
- Inability to complete workouts
- Perfectionism or low self-esteem
- Exercise is the individual's primary means of coping with stress
- Menstrual irregularities in women
- Stress fractures, overuse injuries
- Exercise occurs despite injury

Resources

If someone you know has developed any of the symptoms listed here, talk to a physician, school counselor, dietician, or athletic trainer, or contact T.H.E. Center for Disordered Eating for more information.

T.H.E. Center for Disordered Eating is an organization of concerned community members working together to establish support and resources for individuals and families battling disordered eating and related body issues.

Phone: (828) 337-4685
Email: info@thecenternc.org

Or visit our website:
www.thecenternc.org

T.H.E. Center offers a library of information on eating disorders and disordered eating, support groups for families and adults, and presentations for schools and athletic teams.

Disordered Eating in Athletes

Resources for coaches



T.H.E. Center (for Disordered Eating)
OF WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

NationalEatingDisorders.org



NEDA

NETWORK

Risks & Protective Factors

Risk factors unique to Athletes:

- Sports that emphasize appearance or weight requirements such as gymnastics, diving, bodybuilding, or wrestling.
- Sports that focus on the individual or involve high endurance. For example: running, swimming, dance.
- The inaccurate belief that a lower body weight will improve performance.
- Coaches who focus only on success and performance rather than the athlete as a whole person.

Protective factors for Athletes:

- Social influence and support from teammates with healthy attitudes toward their bodies and their food.
- Coaches who emphasize factors like motivation and enthusiasm rather than body weight or shape.
- A positive coaching style oriented toward the individual athlete, rather than a negative, performance oriented style.

The Female Athlete Triad

Physically active young women (both competitive and not) are at risk of the *female athlete triad*. The female athlete triad is a combination of conditions that can lead to serious, lasting medical consequences.

1) Disordered eating—ranging from simple dieting to full-blown eating disorders, disordered eating indicates an unhealthy obsession with

2) Loss of menstrual periods –although amenorrhea in athletes is assumed to be “normal” for some sports, it is never an acceptable or healthy consequence of exercise.

3) Osteoporosis—when amenorrhea is left untreated it can lead to a serious reduction in bone density.

A similar phenomenon has been observed in young men who compete in appearance-based sports, where they are also at risk for bone loss and disordered eating.

For more information about the female athlete triad, visit the website of the Female Athlete Triad Coalition at

<http://www.femaleathletetriad.org>



- Eating disorders affect 62% of female athletes in “judged” sports like gymnastics and diving.
- Disordered eating patterns affect more than 50% of female athletes.