



# FUELING WITH A PURPOSE

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**FUEL TO BE STRONG • FUEL YOUR BODY • FOOD IS FUEL**

Fuel with a purpose. Fuel to be strong. Fuel your body. Food is fuel. These are just a few of the messages sports dietitians use to promote optimal fueling and a healthy body image. Many successful athletes are motivated by a desire to excel and have a natural competitive nature, often possessing driven and perfectionistic personalities. It is not uncommon for athletes to begin to take workouts and dietary practices to unhealthy extremes in order to achieve success. As the prevalence of disordered eating in sport continues, sports dietitians and all medical personnel must learn to identify properly and follow evidenced based-practice when treating athletes with these issues.



## DISORDERED EATING

Disordered eating occurs when attitudes toward food, body weight, and size lead to eating and exercise habits that could potentially be dangerous to one's health and well-being. Higher rates of **eating disorders (ED)** have been found in elite athletes compared to non-athletes.



## SIGNS & CONSEQUENCES

- Training more than recommended.
- Overuse injuries or stress fractures.
- Low energy availability.
- High level of anxiety when unable to practice or train.
- Negative comments about weight or being "fat".
- Avoidance of social situations, esp. those involving food.
- Loss of muscle.
- Decrease in testosterone levels in men.
- Fatigue.
- Dehydration.
- Electrolyte imbalance.
- Low blood sugar.

## CAUTION

### OTHER RISKS/DETRIMENTS TO PERFORMANCE:

- Decrease in speed.
- Decrease in endurance and coordination.
- Increased risk of injury due to under-fueling weak bones.
- Menstrual irregularities.
- Chronic muscle soreness.
- Low energy + increased recovery time.

## WAYS TO FOSTER HEALTHY EATING PRACTICES AMONG YOUR ATHLETES:

- Promote realistic goals to avoid physical/mental burnout.
  - Focus should be on fitness levels and performance, rather than body weight.
- Help your athletes strive for balance between exercise and eating.
- Encourage mindful and purposeful eating by honoring their hunger cues.
- Remind your athletes that celebrities and models aren't D1 athletes, and make them aware of how celebrity photos are often altered with airbrushing, etc.

- Help your athletes avoid comparing their bodies to athletes on TV.
  - "Your body is unique to you!"
- Work with your athletes on "body satisfaction."
  - Remind them to be proud of everything that their body does for them.
- Work with athletes on developing healthy and positive thoughts about food, food groups, and body image.
  - "Food is fuel for my performance."
  - "Carbohydrates provide my body with the energy I need and help with my recovery."
  - "Fats are essential for nutrient absorption and hormonal balance."



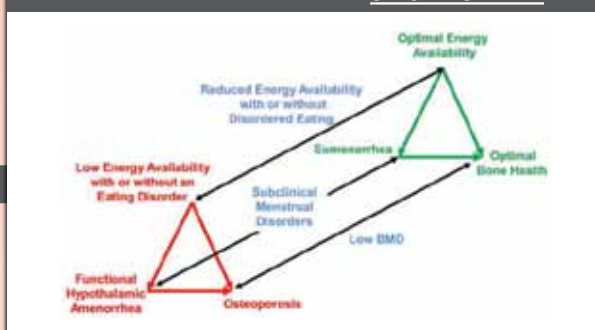
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## FEMALE ATHLETE TRIAD VS. RELATIVE ENERGY DEFICIENCY IN SPORT (RED-S):

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) states the current concept of Female Athlete Triad may not address consequences of low energy availability for male athletes, non-Caucasian athletes, and disabled athletes.

- The IOC has broadened and redefined its previous consensus statement on the Female Athlete Triad as Relative Energy Deficiency in Sport (RED-S).
- RED-S—a syndrome of “impaired physiological functioning including, but not limited to, metabolic rate, menstrual function, bone health, immunity, protein synthesis, cardiovascular health caused by relative energy deficiency.”
- The RED-S theory still requires more research and validation, so it is not yet fully accepted by all members of the research/medical community.

### FEMALE ATHLETE TRIAD - [CLICK TO VIEW](#)



### RED-S THEORY - [CLICK TO VIEW](#)



## KEY CONCEPT:

**Energy Availability (EA) = Energy Intake (EI) – Energy Expenditure (EE)**

Health and nutrition professionals can address low EA by helping athletes work on increasing calorie intake and/or decreasing activity.

## STEPS TO TAKE WHEN CONCERNED ABOUT AN ATHLETE WITH DISORDERED EATING/EATING DISORDERS:

### 1. IDENTIFICATION:

If a teammate or health professional witnesses an athlete displaying signs or symptoms of an eating disorder, he or she should inform an athletic trainer or medical staff member about the observed behaviors.

### 2. REFERRAL:

Appropriate intervention involves an expression of concern regarding a student athlete’s display of specific eating or exercise behaviors that may interfere with his or her health and athletic performance.

- Build trust with the athlete by showing your concern and ensuring confidentiality.
  - Provide only need-to-know information to the coach.
- Request that the student-athlete meet with the designated medical staff member, who will determine appropriate referrals to the designated physician, psychologist, registered dietitian, or other providers.
- Ensure a team approach and regular communication.

### 3. TREATMENT & INTERVENTION:

An individualized treatment plan will be determined based on initial assessments from the treatment providers.

- Nutrition education and counseling should be provided in order to focus on “fueling with a purpose” and developing mindful eating strategies.
  - Sports dietitians or sports psychologists should address barriers, challenges, psychological issues in achieving adequate calorie intake.
- When there is no sports dietitian available or the sports dietitian on staff does not have a specialization in EDs, refer out to a registered dietitian in the community who specializes in eating disorders.