EATING DISORDERS & ATHLETES

Athletics are a great way to build self-esteem, promote physical conditioning, and demonstrate the value of teamwork, but not all athletic stressors are positive. The pressure to win and an emphasis on body weight and shape can create a toxic combination. Coaches and trainers should be aware of the effects of disordered eating, and encourage healthy and balanced behaviors in their athletes.

ATHLETES IN AESTHETIC & WEIGHT-CLASS SPORTS AT RISK

Though most athletes with eating disorders are female, male athletes are also at risk—especially those competing in sports that tend to emphasize diet, appearance, size, and weight.

In aesthetic sports, such as:

- bodybuilding
- gymnastics
- figure skating

And weight-class sports, such as:

- wrestling
- rowing
- horseracing

It's estimated that disordered eating affects:

- Women: 62%
- Men: 33%

INJURIES & MEDICAL COMPLICATIONS AMONG FEMALE ATHLETES

Among female high school athletes in aesthetic sports,

- 42% of athletes reported disordered eating, and they were...
  - 8X more likely to incur injury than athletes who did not report disordered eating.

A STUDY OF FEMALE DIVISION II ATHLETES FOUND THAT:

- 25% had disordered eating
- 26% reported menstrual dysfunction
- 10% had low bone mineral density
- 3% had all three symptoms

ATHLETIC TRAINERS NEED SUPPORT, EDUCATION, & PREVENTION RESOURCES

A survey among college athletic trainers working with female athletes found that:

- 91% reported dealing with an athlete with an eating disorder
- 93% felt that increased attention needs to be paid to preventing eating disorders among female athletes
- 27% felt confident identifying an athlete with an eating disorder
- 25% worked at an institution without a policy on managing eating disorders

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