

**10 Things Coaches Can Do To Help  
Prevent Eating Disorders  
In Their Athletes**

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1. Recognize the signs and symptoms of eating disorders and understand their role in prevention.
2. Provide athletes with accurate information regarding weight, weight loss, nutrition, and sports performance in order to reduce misinformation and to challenge practices that are unhealthy and even counter-productive. Be aware of local professionals who will help educate the athletes.
3. Emphasize the health risks of low weight, especially for female athletes with menstrual irregularities or amenorrhea. The athlete should be referred for medical assessment in these cases.
4. Refer to a professional skilled at treating eating disorders.
5. De-emphasize weight by not weighing athletes and by minimizing (eliminating) comments about weight. Focus on other areas in which athletes have more control in order to improve performance (i.e. strength & conditioning).
6. Do not assume that reducing body fat or weight will enhance performance. Studies show that this does not apply to all athletes. Improved performance should not be at the expense of the athlete's health.
7. Understand why weight is such a sensitive and personal issue for many women. Validate their feelings while also providing them with correct, helpful information.
8. Explore your own values and attitudes regarding weight, dieting, and body-image and how these may inadvertently affect your athletes.
9. Do not automatically curtail athletic participation if an athlete is found to have eating problems, unless warranted by a medical condition.
10. Take warning signs seriously. Early detection increases the likelihood of successful treatment.