

Fueling For Sport

A coach's guide to understanding and supporting the nutrition needs of their athletes



Nutrition for Performance

- Educate your athletes on the importance of appropriate fueling throughout the day, including the importance of food and hydration before, during, and after a workout.
- Connect with a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN) who can guide your athletes. Visit www.eatright.org to Find a Nutrition Expert, searching by sports nutrition expertise.
- If you have a budget or parents are willing to contribute, create a fueling station to provide snacks.

Recognize the Red Flags

- Know some of the signs of an eating disorder apart from weight loss, including: change in mood, focus, or emotional state; social withdrawal; negative body image talk; any type of dieting behavior; extreme clean eating; excessive water intake; avoidance of eating in front of others; exhaustion; overtraining; decreased training response; and frequent illness or injuries
- Understand that eating disorders may look different from one athlete to another, and many times, may hide in plain sight

Prioritize the Whole Person

- Treat athletes as people and unique individuals, first and foremost
- Foster an inclusive team culture that prioritizes physical, mental, and social well-being
- Emphasize the importance of proper fueling, recovery nutrition, hydration, sleep, and rest as keys to optimize performance
- Highlight athletes' successes both in and out of sport

View Risk Management as a Team Responsibility	● Identify people and resources available inside your athletic department and in your local community ● Assemble an eating concerns team that includes a certified Athletic Trainer (ATC), Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN), and a counselor or mental health professional ● Explore the ATC's capacity to screen for eating disorder risk on pre-participation physicals ● Know when to consult the eating concerns team if you are concerned about an athlete's eating behaviors ● Avoid linking body weight or size to performance in coaching conversations ● Do not weigh your athletes
---	--

Promote Positivity	● Maintain a positive and open dialogue that promotes food and exercise without extremes ● Have zero-tolerance for body-shaming or body-comparing talk ● Lead by example and model the values you hope to instill in your athletes ● Repeat nutrition advice endorsed by the Registered Dietitian expert ● Routinely communicate with athletes about what additional support they might benefit from
----------------------------------	--

Reliable Resources	● <i>Sports Nutrition Guidebook</i>, by Nancy Clark, MS, RDN ● <i>Finding your Sweet Spot: How to Avoid RED-S (Relative Energy Deficiency in Sport)</i> by <i>Optimizing Your Energy Balance</i>, by Rebecca McConville, MS, RDN, CSSD, CEDRD ● Download nutrition fact sheets from: sportsrd.org/downloadable-resources/ and eatright.org/fitness/physical-activity/exercise-nutrition ● Learn more about communicating with your athletes from ASPDA/sportsrd.org (previously CSPDA): https://runninginsilence.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/ASPDA-Acceptable_Verbiage-by-Lauren-Link-MS-RD-CSSD.pdf (PDF made by Lauren Link, MS, RD, CSSD) ● Get more training to build your eating disorder awareness: https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/CoachAthleticTrainerToolkit.pdf ● Read our blog posts, including the Q&A series for coaches: https://runninginsilence.org/?s=Q%26A
----------------------------------	---

Running in Silence is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization seeking to bring awareness to eating disorders in sport by bridging the gap between health professionals and members of the athletic community. For more information, visit Runninginsilence.org.