

THE IMPACT OF ISOLATION AND SPORT RE-BOOT ON BODY IMAGE AND EATING BEHAVIOUR — INFORMATION FOR COACHES AND PERFORMANCE SUPPORT STAFF

In these unprecedented times during the COVID-19 pandemic, our athletes may face a range of challenges. These include, but are not limited to:



Changes in training regime, schedule and location



Cancellation and postponement of upcoming competitions, including benchmark events



Return to training and competition through sport re-boot in varying capacities



Food insecurity or concerns about food scarcity



Job and income insecurity (both personally and within their family unit)



Changes in housing situations (for example, moving back in with family due to lost income)



Social isolation



Illness — personally or in family, friends, team mates



Fear, stress, anxiety and grief over the worldwide pandemic



Internal and/or external pressure to maintain 'usual' athlete body composition



Changes in body image and/or body composition



Frequent self-weighing (initiated by either the athlete themselves or coaches/support staff)

All of these factors have the potential to affect an athlete's eating behaviour and can act as a trigger for disordered eating, or may make an existing condition worse.

Even the most resilient athlete will face challenges and have potential triggers that may cause disordered eating. **No athlete is immune** to disordered eating and all athletes should be monitored and supported during this time.

Maintaining physical and mental health now will better equip athletes to regain and build performance when usual training and competition is able to resume. If you notice your athlete/s are:



Mental Health Referral Network

ais.gov.au/MHRN

mentalhealth@ausport.gov.au

+61 2 6214 1130

(Monday-Friday 9am-5pm AET)



[AIS.gov.au](https://ais.gov.au)

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Following the four tips below will help you work with your athletes to minimise/reduce the impact of the current environment on their eating behaviour, with the optimal goal to maintain your athletes physical and mental health during these trying times:



Athletes with a known eating disorder need extra care and support during these times. Discuss any concerns about these athletes with your team Doctor, Psychologist or Sports Dietitian. Athletes currently receiving treatment for an eating disorder can and should continue to access treatment providers through telehealth.

Athletes who have recovered from an eating disorder, are suspected to have an eating disorder or who have disordered eating are also vulnerable at this time.

Note: It is also important you look after yourself. You can't look after your athletes if you aren't looking after yourself. Understand that these unprecedented times are affecting all of us, and that your own body and body image may also go through changes at this time. Keep focused on maintaining mental and physical health, reach out for support from the AIS Mental Health Referral Network.

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