

What Are Eating Disorders?

Eating disorders are serious psychological and medical conditions involving harmful eating behaviors and distorted body image (American Psychiatric Association, 2022).

COMMON TYPES

- Anorexia Nervosa
 - Severe restriction of food intake
- Bulimia Nervosa
 - Binge eating with compensatory behaviors
- Binge Eating Disorder
 - Recurrent binge episodes
- OSFED
 - Clinically significant symptoms that don't meet full criteria

In sport, these may appear as:

- "Clean eating" taken to extremes
- Skipping meals
- Overtraining
- Fear of weight gain

What is REDs?

Relative Energy Deficiency in Sport (REDs) occurs when an athlete does not consume enough energy to support both training and basic physiological function (Mountjoy et al., 2018).

Low energy availability can disrupt:

- Hormones
- Bone health
- Growth & puberty
- Menstrual function
- Mood & concentration
- Immune function
- REDs can occur with or without a diagnosed eating disorder and affects both males and females.

REDs can develop when:

- Athletes diet or restrict food
- Busy schedules lead to missed meals
- Training increases without increased fueling
- Growth and puberty increase energy needs

American Psychiatric Association. (2022). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed., text rev.)*.

Gorrell, S., Murray, S. B., & colleagues. (2022). Eating disorders in athletes: A meta-analytic review. *Sports Medicine*, 52, 675–691.

Mountjoy, M., Sundgot-Borgen, J., Burke, L., et al. (2018). IOC consensus statement on relative energy deficiency in sport (REDs): 2018 update. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 52(11), 687–697.

FUELING YOUNG ATHLETES

Eating Disorders & REDs in youth sport



Strong bodies need strong fuel.

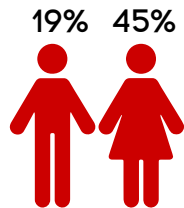
Eating disorders and Relative Energy Deficiency in Sport (REDs) can quietly impact health, growth, and performance.

Parents are the first line of protection!



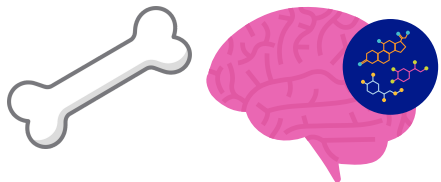
How Common Is This?

- Up to 45% of female and 19% of male adolescent athletes report disordered eating behaviors (Gorrell et al., 2022).



- Higher rates in sports emphasizing leanness or weight categories.
- Many cases go undetected because underfueling is normalized in sport culture.

Youth athletes are still growing. Chronic under fueling during adolescence can impair peak bone mass, hormone development, and long-term health.



Warning Signs & Health Risks

Warning Signs:

- Skipping meals
- Avoiding team meals
- Excessive exercise
- Rapid weight changes
- Fatigue
- Frequent injuries
- Missed menstrual cycles
- Mood changes or irritability

Health Risks:

- Stress fractures
- Decreased bone density
- Hormonal disruption
- Delayed growth
- Anxiety and depression
- Decline in performance

Eating disorders and REDs are related but not the same.

Not all athletes with eating disorders develop REDs, and not all cases of REDs stem from a diagnosed eating disorder. REDs can result from intentional restriction or simply not eating enough to match training and growth demands.

What Parents Can Do To Help

- Approach with curiosity
- Focus on energy, recovery, and health
- Encourage balanced fueling
- Model positive body language at home
- Seek professional help early

Consult:

- Pediatrician
- Registered dietitian (sports RD preferred)
- Sport psychologist
- Athletic trainer

Early intervention improves recovery outcomes.

