

Healthful Ways to MANAGE WEIGHT

Athletes often associate appearance and weight with performance. Sports such as wrestling, youth football, rowing and boxing use weight classifications to ensure healthy, safe and fair participation. With activities such as dance, distance running, gymnastics and cycling, the athlete's body composition is believed to influence their performance physically and aesthetically. While there are performance and health benefits associated with lean body mass and lower levels of body fat, there are negative outcomes associated with excessive weight loss.



Unsafe weight management practices can compromise athletic performance and negatively affect health.

What is Unsafe?: Engaging in problematic weight-control behaviors such as not eating, binge eating, purging, limiting caloric intake and restricting fluids.

Athletes can feel pressured to control their weight from various sources, such as parents, coaches, society and judging criteria, which can place them at risk of developing unrealistic weight goals and problematic weight-control behaviors.

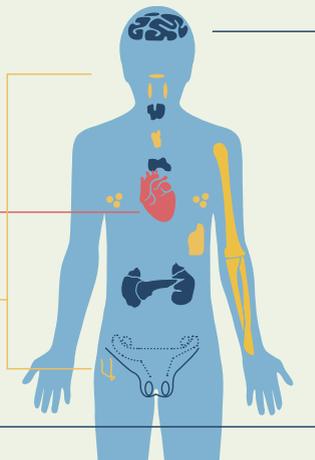
Athletes who take unhealthy steps to manage their weight can experience reductions in energy, aerobic performance, recall, visual understanding, reaction time and planning time.

Extremely low-caloric diets can negatively impact the:

Cardiovascular system

Immune system

Endocrine system



There are healthy ways athletes can achieve their ideal weight and body composition.

Athletes should talk to their athletic trainer, family physician or a registered dietitian about creating reasonable, individualized weight and body composition goals.

A proper weight management plan should include diet and exercise, and should be designed to meet the athlete's specific needs.



Diet:

Caloric intake should be based on lean body mass, desired body composition, goal weight and sports or activity requirements.

- A healthy meal plan should include essential energy-producing nutrients—protein, carbohydrates and fats—and non-energy-producing nutrients—vitamins, minerals and water.
- A healthy diet should be maintained throughout the year.



Exercise:

Weight and body composition adjustments ideally should occur before competitive seasons.

- During competitive seasons, focus on performance, strength, power and training intensity.
- During off-season preparatory periods, focus on physical conditioning, developing lean body mass, aerobic capacity and muscular endurance.

Any body composition adjustments should be gradual and shouldn't include any excessive restrictions or use of unsafe behaviors or products.

The goal should be to lose one to two pounds and no more than 1.5 percent body weight a week—a higher rate can indicate unsafe behaviors that can negatively affect performance and health.

