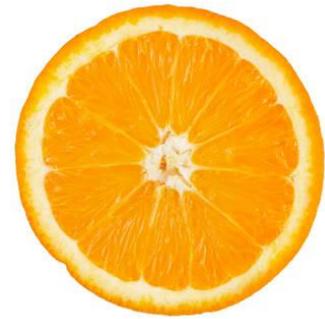


Prep School Performance Nutrition News with *Kathleen Searles, MS, RD, LDN*



(978) 697-2834

www.lunchbox-nutritionist.com

Nutritionist. Speaker. Consultant.

Do you have athletes who need or want to cut weight for their sport? Educators and health professionals alike worry about childhood obesity but also worry about disordered eating behaviors. The best way to help you teen athletes is to model body acceptance and to encourage healthy eating. Remember, weight changes are best addressed during the off-season. Read on for some practical suggestions!

- *Kathleen Searles, MS, RD, CSSD, LDN*

Can Teen Athletes Cut Weight Safely?

Sometimes a teen athlete or a coach feels that weight loss would help with performance. Cutting weight can be tricky for teenagers because they are still growing and maturing. Over-concern with weight may affect self-esteem or occasionally lead to disordered eating behaviors. How can adults help teens to achieve their best playing weight? The best approach is to focus on healthy eating strategies for all athletes. A study published in [JAMA Pediatrics](#) in August looked at parent/teen conversations. Conversations focused on

Please call or e-mail me today to learn more information!

Contact Kathleen Searles, MS, RD, CSSD, LDN at [978-697-2834](tel:978-697-2834) or ksearles@lunchbox-nutritionist.com

Sensible Swaps for Athletes with Weight Concerns Instead Of...

- Whole or 2 % milk
- Granola
- Premium ice cream
- Pepperoni pizza
- Big Mac
- Large Fries
- Meatball sub
- Fried chicken

Try...

- Skim milk
- Cheerios or Wheat Chex
- Regular ice cream
- Cheese or veggie pizza
- Regular cheeseburger
- Small fries
- Turkey sub
- Grilled or roasted chicken

Adapted from *Fuel for Young Athletes*, by Ann Litt, MS, RD, 2004
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Resources for this newsletter:

- Berg JM et al. "Parent Conversations About Healthful Eating and Weight Associations With Adolescent Disordered Eating Behaviors." [JAMA Pediatrics](#),

healthful eating did not tend to lead to unhealthy weight practices or disordered eating behaviors.

Conversations focused on weight, however, increased the likelihood of unhealthy weight change behaviors.

Some of the healthy eating tips that coaches and parents can focus on include:

- Eat breakfast daily
- Do not skip meals
- Minimize use of sugary, high calorie beverages such as sodas, energy drinks and fruit juice
- Less fried food
- Eat mindfully
 - eat slowly, enjoy meals and snacks, focus on hunger and fullness cues
- Focus on fruits and vegetables
- Go light on gravies, sauces, and extras such as shredded cheese and dressing

2013; 167(8): 746-753.doi.10.1001/jamapediatrics.2013.78.

- Litt A. Fuel for Young Athletes. Human Kinetics, 2004.
- <http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/sites/default/files/Toolkits/CoachandTrainerToolkit.pdf>
- Fuel for Young Athletes, by Ann Litt, MS, RD, 2004

- Whenever possible, let a regularly scheduled meal serve as pre-game or recovery nutrition

Coaches and other adults should be alert for signs that a teen is not approaching weight loss in a healthy manner. These include:

- Irritability or other changes from usual demeanor
- Rapid weight loss
- Decreased energy level in practice and daily activities
- Not participating in team pizza nights or other food related activities
- Lack of expected growth
- Increase in stress fractures and illnesses

Some sports require a certain weight or body aesthetic, and teens in these sports need support for body acceptance and healthy eating.

This includes athletes in wrestling, dance, swimming, figure skating, gymnastics, diving, and rowing.

Coaches should not comment on or tease an athlete about his/her body, even in a good-natured spirit. Remember that how an athlete feels and performs is more important than how he or she looks.

If you have athletes who need help with weight issues, refer them to the athletic trainer, health services, or school nutritionist. A Registered Dietitian (preferably a Board Certified Specialist in Sports Dietetics) can work with the student to develop an individualized meal plan, including pre-game and recovery meals and a hydration plan.
