



SPEED PROJECT

Sport & Prevention of Emerging Eating Disorders

THEMATIC AREA 5

Thoughts and concerns about weight: when it becomes a problem

Weight is often improperly used as the only indicator of physical fitness. These cards clarify the real meaning of weight, its relationship with physical exercise and the main warning signs that should not be underestimated — useful for recognising possible difficulties at an early stage.

IN THIS AREA:

- Card 1** The meaning of weight
- Card 2** The link between weight and physical exercise
- Card 3** Warning signs



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AREA 5 • CONCERNS ABOUT WEIGHT — CARD 1

The meaning of weight

Weight is often used as a parameter to assess a person's physical fitness and to label them as "thin" or "fat".

However, weight depends on different components, which do not necessarily correspond to these labels, and it changes according to body structure and the physical activity a person carries out.

For example, muscle mass is heavy: it is therefore likely that an athlete, proportionally, weighs more than a non-athlete while being equally "fit". Muscle structure also changes according to the sport practised and the level at which it is practised.

In women, weight fluctuations can also be linked to the menstrual cycle.

Weight cannot be the only yardstick used to assess physical fitness. It is important to understand that many components influence weight, which therefore cannot be used as the sole parameter for assessing a person's physical fitness.



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AREA 5 • CONCERNS ABOUT WEIGHT — CARD 2

The link between weight and physical exercise

Physical exercise is often used as a means of keeping weight under control, but it is important that sport does not become merely a tool for regulating it.

Physical exercise and muscle development can also lead to an increase in weight, but this does not mean a worsening of physical fitness.

It is important to understand that every part of the body has its own function and that these functions are fundamental to an athlete's performance.

Training can change body shape, but it is important not to interpret this change as something negative, somehow linked to the idea of having gained weight.



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AREA 5 • CONCERNS ABOUT WEIGHT — CARD 3

Warning signs

The warning signs that can be observed are of three kinds: physical, behavioural and psychological.

Physical signs

- rapid weight loss or frequent weight fluctuations;
- increased sensitivity to cold;
- damaged teeth, swollen cheeks, calluses on the knuckles;
- fainting or dizziness;
- a frequent feeling of tiredness;
- loss of the menstrual cycle.

Behavioural signs

- dieting;
- excessive or compulsive exercise;
- avoiding situations where food is eaten;
- frequent use of the bathroom, especially after eating;
- changes in the way of dressing (loose clothes);
- excessive sensitivity to comments about the body, weight and eating;
- changes in eating habits, identifying “forbidden” foods.

Psychological signs

- having a distorted body image;
- increased preoccupation with food, weight and body image;
- changes in psychological state, anxiety and mood;
- rigid thinking about food;
- a feeling of loss of control around food;
- using food as comfort or as punishment.

If one or more of these signs are present, it is important not to underestimate them and to turn to a qualified professional.