

# Effects of An Eating Disorder

## On the Athlete's Health

1. *More individuals die from anorexia than any other psychiatric disorder.* Medical complications can affect every organ system, ranging from mild dysfunction to **death**, depending on the severity and chronicity of the disorder. Poor circulation, lack of available energy, electrolyte disturbances, increased physical demands, and hormonal imbalances can result in organ failure (heart, liver, and kidney). Death is usually related to organ failure.
2. Dental problems, sleep disturbance, skeletal system complications, and reproductive system complications are common.
3. Depression and anxiety often occur with an eating disorder and can either precede and/or follow the disorder, and complicate treatment.
4. Suicide is the second leading cause of death.

## On the Athlete's Sport Performance

1. Athletes can sometimes perform well despite having a serious eating disorder, but eventually the disorder begins to affect the athlete both physically and psychologically.
2. Following a period of intense dieting,  $VO_{2max}$  and running speed usually decrease.
3. Inadequate carbohydrate intake results in early glycogen depletion and fatigue.
4. Inadequate carbohydrate intake results in increased use of protein as fuel.
5. Inadequate protein can lead to muscle weakness, wasting, and injury (increased risk of musculoskeletal injuries due to inability to build/repair muscle tissue damage).
6. Dehydration leads to fatigue, poorer performance, and earlier glycogen depletion.
7. Symptomatic athletes are apt to be malnourished, dehydrated, depressed, anxious, and obsessed (with eating, food, and weight). Most athletes find they lose concentration and the capacity to play with emotion, in addition to the negative effects on the athlete's physiology.

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