



SPEED PROJECT

Sport & Prevention of Emerging Eating Disorders

Nutrition on training days, competition days, and rest days

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Why not all days “count” in the same way

Not all days demand the same energy:

High-load days, low-load days, competition days, and rest days each require slightly different nutritional strategies.

Many adolescents tend to eat the same way regardless of their sporting commitments. This leads to:

- Days when they consume too much energy
- Days when they consume too little

Recognising the differences helps avoid fatigue and performance drops.



Intense training days: what really changes

Greater energy reserves needed:

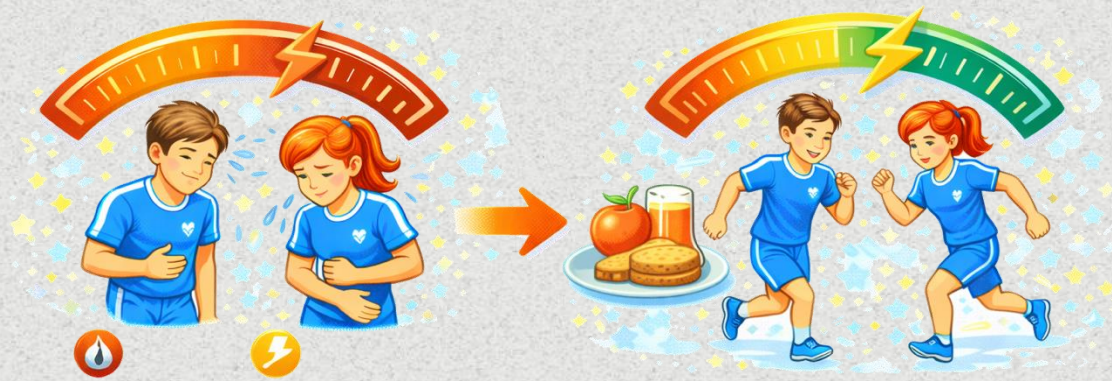
Training in the late afternoon:

- Lunch more substantial + afternoon snack more 'targeted' to avoid dips during the session

Training in the early afternoon:

- Lunch easily digestible: complex carbohydrates, avoid fatty dressings, limit protein
- Post-training snack needs to be more substantial

Large quantities are not needed, but greater attention to meal quality is.



Competition day: the rule of “predictability”

The rule of predictability:

The body must work without surprises. Avoid unfamiliar foods or last-minute experiments.

The pre-competition meal must be:

- Simple and digestible
- Well tolerated — stick to what the body knows

Many adolescents eat too little or too much due to excitement or tension. The coach can convey calm and remind athletes that competition is also prepared through a consistent meal.



What happens after competition

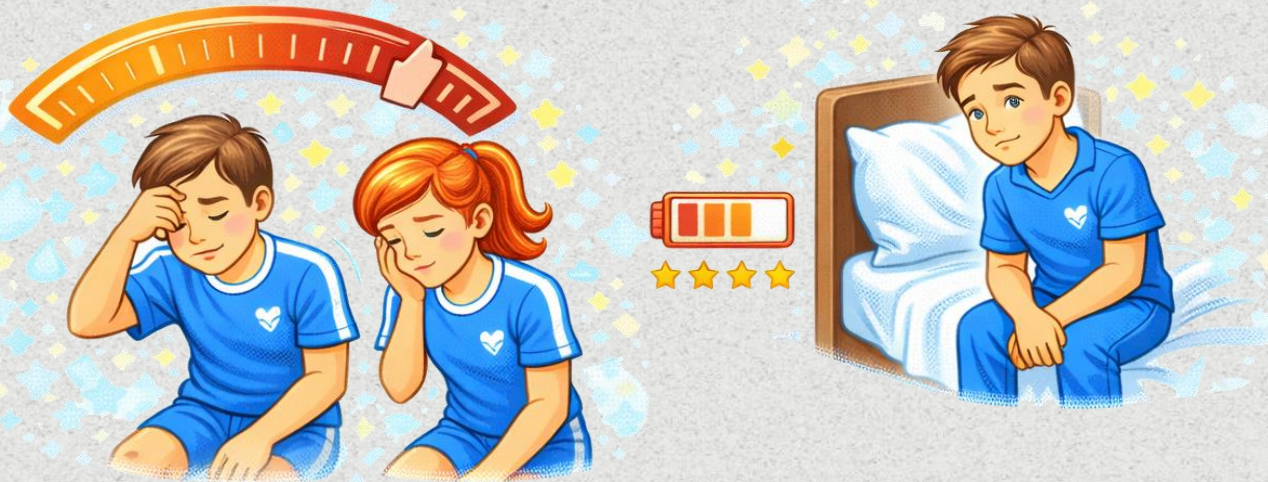
Recovery after competition:

After a competition the body has consumed a great deal of energy and is often under physical and emotional stress.

Encourage as soon as possible:

- A small recovery snack
- Followed by a complete, balanced meal

An adolescent who does not eat after competition risks arriving the following day with insufficient energy reserves, compromising overall recovery.



Rest days: why they are not “free days”



Rest is not the absence of work:

Rest is when tissues rebuild, the body processes training stimuli, and improvement occurs. If energy intake is too low, recovery will be less efficient.

On rest days:

- Caloric intake can be slightly reduced — but meal quality must remain high
- Proteins distributed throughout the day
- Complex carbohydrates and good hydration

This ensures the body presents itself regenerated for subsequent sessions.



What a coach can do to guide weekly nutrition

Guiding the nutritional week:

A coach does not need to organise athletes' eating days, but can explain that within a week there are days with higher energy demands and days with lower ones.

Simple messages with real impact:

- A too-light lunch on a high-load day compromises the entire session
- A balanced meal on a rest day makes the athlete fresher the following day

Understanding these mechanisms helps young athletes become more autonomous and aware.

