



SPEED PROJECT

Sport & Prevention of Emerging Eating Disorders

THEMATIC AREA 4

The body shapes of an athlete

An athlete's body shape depends on the sport practised and on its functions, and cannot be judged on the basis of a single aesthetic criterion or of weight alone. These cards help to read body differences without attaching value judgements to them.

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- Card 1** Differences between the body shape of an athlete and a non-athlete
- Card 2** Differences in body shape among different athletes
- Card 3** The difference between body shape and weight



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AREA 4 • AN ATHLETE'S BODY SHAPES — CARD 1

Differences between the body shape of an athlete and a non-athlete

Sport partly changes a person's body shape. In sport, physical condition and muscle development play a fundamental role in performance and therefore have a useful function for practising that specific sport.

A person who does not play sport will probably have a different body shape from an athlete, with less developed muscles and an appearance that in some cases may look more slender.

It is often easy to distinguish the body shape of a person who plays sport, especially at a competitive level, from that of a person who does no physical activity at all.

It is important not to attach a value judgement to this: the body shapes of an athlete and of a person who does not play sport are simply different and depend on the different functions the body performs for each of them.



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AREA 4 • AN ATHLETE'S BODY SHAPES — CARD 2

Differences in body shape among different athletes

Differences in body shape do not exist only between an athlete and a non-athlete, but also between athletes who practise different activities.

Each sport requires the development of different muscles and parts of the body, because it requires the improvement of different functions.

For this reason the appearance of athletes is highly varied and suited to maximising performance in a particular activity.

It makes no sense for an athlete to compare their own body shape with that of an athlete who practises a different discipline, or to attach an aesthetic value judgement to this difference, if the sport they practise is a source of satisfaction and forms part of their identity.



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AREA 4 • AN ATHLETE'S BODY SHAPES — CARD 3

The difference between body shape and weight

Weight and body shape are not interchangeable. The same weight can correspond to very different body shapes depending on other factors, such as muscle development and a person's bone structure.

For this reason, weight alone cannot be used as a parameter to assess whether a person is fit: it is important to take all factors into account.

When a person wants to change their weight, it is essential that they turn to a professional who can analyse all the parameters that influence body shape, the person's age and the activity they carry out. In this way weight is considered correctly and not as the sole point of reference for defining body shape.



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