



SPEED PROJECT

Sport & Prevention of Emerging Eating Disorders

THEMATIC AREA 6

General information on nutrition and healthy lifestyles

A healthy lifestyle includes nutrition, sleep, movement, hydration and mental well-being. These cards provide general principles for a balanced, sustainable diet and for recognising the most widespread myths, especially on social media.

IN THIS AREA:

- Card 1** What a healthy lifestyle involves
- Card 2** General principles for healthy eating
- Card 3** Myths about food and nutrition



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AREA 6 • NUTRITION AND HEALTHY LIFESTYLES — CARD 1

What a healthy lifestyle involves

A healthy lifestyle does not mean only eating well: sleep, physical activity, hydration, rest and mental well-being are also part of it. Moving regularly during the day, sleeping enough and with good sleep quality, drinking enough water and following a regular diet all help support both physical and mental health. Especially for those who play sport, training is not enough: the body also needs rest and recovery.

Sleeping too little, having irregular meals, remaining sedentary for many hours or experiencing situations of high stress can negatively affect both daily life and sporting performance. For this reason a healthy lifestyle requires an overall balance between the various daily habits.

Having a healthy lifestyle does not mean following rigid rules, forbidding certain foods or having to be “perfect”. Being flexible, calmly enjoying social occasions and building a balanced relationship with food are also part of a healthy lifestyle. The goal is not only to change physical appearance, but to help the person feel energetic, strong and healthy.



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AREA 6 • NUTRITION AND HEALTHY LIFESTYLES — CARD 2

General principles for healthy eating

Healthy eating is not a set of rigid rules or prohibitions, but a varied, adequate and balanced eating habit. To allow the body to receive the energy and nutrients it needs, it is important to include different food groups during the day: vegetables and fruit, cereals, milk and dairy products, protein sources and healthy fats are all part of a balanced diet.

Especially in adolescents who play sport, the basis of the diet should consist of foods with a high nutritional value. After many hours without eating, choosing chocolate, packaged snacks, sweets or products very high in sugar as the first food might not provide lasting satiety and could lead to hunger again soon afterwards. It is therefore preferable to eat first a more complete and balanced meal, containing carbohydrates, proteins, healthy fats and fibre.

If, after a nutritious meal, a person still wants a dessert or a less nutritious food, and there are no health conditions that prevent it, there is no need to forbid these foods completely. Often, when you are already full, it is easier to manage portions and to eat them in a more balanced way. In this way the body receives the nutrients it needs and, at the same time, the person can eat what they want without feeling guilty.

A healthy diet should also be sustainable over time. Rather than following very restrictive or temporary diets, it is important to build balanced habits that can fit into everyday life. Especially in adolescents who play sport, it is more useful to develop a flexible, balanced and relaxed relationship with food than to follow overly rigid rules.



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Sport & Prevention of Emerging Eating Disorders

AREA 6 • NUTRITION AND HEALTHY LIFESTYLES — CARD 3

Myths about food and nutrition

Especially through social media, a great deal of incorrect information about nutrition circulates. This can lead to labelling some foods as “good” or “bad” without any real reason. For example, thinking that carbohydrates are always harmful, that bread or pasta inevitably make you put on weight, or that certain foods on their own “burn fat” (such as water and lemon, vinegar or ginger) is not correct. The effect of a food does not depend only on the food itself, but also on the person’s overall diet, on quantities, on the frequency of consumption, on the level of physical activity and on the overall lifestyle.

Another very widespread belief is to see food and physical exercise as a system of reward and punishment. For example, one may think they have to do extra training to “make up for” what they have eaten, or that they must eat very little the following day. In reality, doing sport should not be a punishment for what you have eaten, just as food should not be something to be “earned”. Especially in adolescents who play sport, insufficient nutrition can cause a drop in energy, recovery difficulties and health problems.

Supplements, detox products or popular diets promoted on social media (such as consuming only liquids, completely eliminating carbohydrates or following very low-calorie diets) are not always necessary or safe either. A type of diet that may suit one person might not be suitable for another. For this reason it is important to rely on reliable sources and on the advice of qualified professionals when looking for information about nutrition.



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