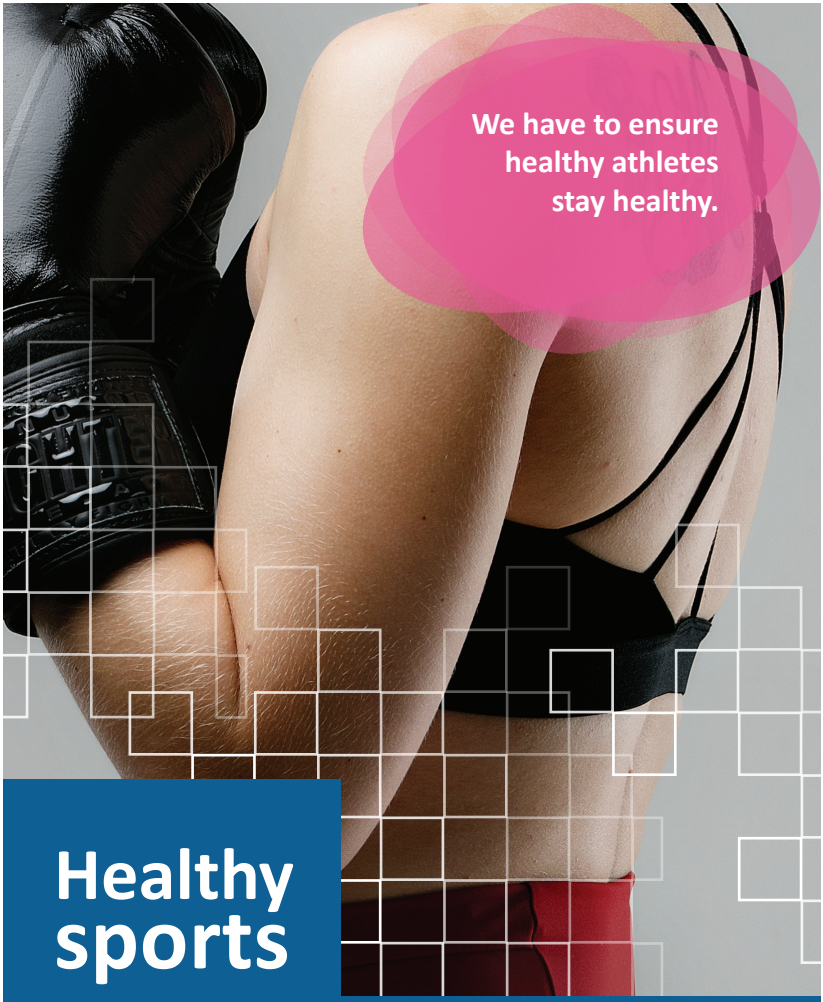

Healthy sports

Information for coaches

WORLD ASSOCIATION OF KICKBOXING ORGANIZATION
WAKO COACHES

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Sport & eating disorders

Eating disorders occur as an interaction between our individual congenital attributes, the people and the environment around us. Three factors in particular seem to increase the risk of eating disorders:

- **Transition from young athlete to senior.**
  As a coach you should be aware of physical as well as psychological changes related to entering puberty. This is a vulnerable time for a lot of girls.

- **Dieting**
  Young athletes should not be advised to lose weight. If they have a strong wish to change their bodies, you can help them get in touch with a qualified professional, for instance a nutritionist.

- **Injury or illness**
  Long periods when the athlete cannot train as they want or as planned, can create uncertainty related to energy intake and consumption.

It is possible to overcome an eating disorder with a lot of personal effort and motivation, especially if the problems are confronted early on. It is important that the youth has a strong support network, and as their coach, you can play an important supportive role.

Good advice for coaches

- Avoid body related comments – whether it is about yourself or other athletes, positive or negative.
- Teach the athletes how the body works, rather than how it should look.
- Take an interest in the athlete's whole situation. School, training, family and friends should create a good balance – since many factors affect performance.
- Discuss and involve your athletes when it comes to goals and development planning. Teach the athletes to take responsibility for their own development.
- Good habits start early – teach your athletes which foods affect their training.
- A good team culture is important, and the athletes should help decide what kind of culture you want on the team.
- Talk to your athletes and build trust. This makes it easier to start a difficult conversation if this becomes necessary.
- As a coach, you can be the catalyst to get help if one of your athletes need guidance about nutrition or body weight. Do not take on a role as therapist.
- Sports should be fun!

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