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### **Stomach Troubles – A Nutritional and Psychological Approach**

Athletes often experience stomach troubles such as bloating, indigestion, acid reflux, diarrhea, and constipation. These can be 'everyday' issues or specific to performance situations. Understanding and diagnosing the potential reasons is critical to both athletic success and personal health.

Food intolerances, life situations or both can have a definite impact on the body making a mess of your digestion! A two-pronged approach of **nutrition** and **stress management** is usually needed to understand the causes and manage stomach troubles given the strong mind-body connection.

#### **Nutrition considerations**

- Monitoring food and fluid intakes is an essential starting point. This will help you gain a richer awareness of eating patterns including the potential negative impact of specific foods and fluids.
- As food intolerances can take time to rule out it is important to be patient with this process and not chase after 'quick fix' solutions or attempts to self-diagnose.
- If it becomes clear that specific foods might be the "gut wrenching" culprit make any nutritional changes under the guidance of a registered dietitian.
- Depending on your situation your dietitian may recommend further medical assessment. Nutritional demands for athletes are different from the general public so trends and popular-culture nutritional concepts may not always apply.

#### **Stress management considerations**

- Being an athlete often carries additional positive and negative stressors (related to sport, school, work, family, social, and hobbies), and the cumulative effects of managing these stressors may show up in several different ways in the body, with the stomach being a primary target.
- Learning ways to manage these stressors and create opportunities for down time, rest and recovery is critical to health, a happy tummy, and athletic success!

#### **Basic Management Techniques**

It is important to:

- follow a healthy nutrition plan
- document any stomach issues and food or fluids consumed during the day
- apply effective stress management and time management skills
- incorporate down-time within the day (rest and recovery)
- ensure a good night's sleep

Seek guidance and support from a variety of sources, including:

- family & friends
- family doctor
- registered dietitian (Susan Boegman - Canadian Sport Centre Pacific)
- sport psychology consultant (Dr. Bruce Pinel – Canadian Sport Centre Pacific)



For more information on a nutritional and psychological approach to stomach problems, please contact [Susan Boegman](#) or [Bruce Pinel](#)

## **Powering Sport Performance**

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