

Pediatricians sound alarm on rapid weight changes in young athletes

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(HealthDay)—Young gymnasts, figure skaters and wrestlers who try to

quickly shed pounds by fasting or restricting fluids may be endangering their health, pediatricians warn.

Similarly, young football players or power-lifters who try to rapidly pack on muscle may also be undermining their [health](#), a new report from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) said.

"Sometimes, children and teens in certain sports believe they need to achieve a particular body type to be successful," report author Dr. Rebecca Carl said in an AAP news release.

"Unless they have a healthy strategy to work toward their goals, however, they can end up defeating themselves and causing [health problems](#)," Carl added.

AAP experts point out that rapid [weight loss](#) by means of fasting or avoidance of fluids can actually lead to a loss of muscle strength, speed and stamina. Quick weight loss can also impair thinking, reaction time, alertness and the ability to problem-solve.

Young divers, runners, boxers and rowers are other athletes who may attempt to lose weight quickly.

The rapid loss of pounds may also lead to depression, mood swings, and even long-term eating disorders, the AAP team cautioned.

And health issues related to dehydration may not be quickly reversed, the experts warned. Rehydration typically requires up to 48 hours of regular fluid intake.

By the same token, fast weight gain increases the risk for obesity-related health problems, the doctors added, while also undermining overall stamina and athletic performance.

The upshot: weight gain and [weight](#) loss should be achieved gradually and over the long term by focusing on a carefully balanced diet paired with consistent exercise, the AAP team advised.

The report appears in the September issue of the journal *Pediatrics*.

More information: There's more information on nutrition for young athletes at [EatRight.org](#).

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