

Health cautions for young male athletes

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(HealthDay)—Exercise has many health benefits for boys, ranging from a lower chance of obesity to improved self-esteem. It may also reduce risk-taking behaviors. However, some sports come with cautions,

especially those with weight classes that could lead to excessive dieting or even anorexia.

Sometimes boys may simply not eat enough calories to make up for all they burn. Intended or not, inadequate nutrition can affect their development. Whereas girls may miss their periods, concerns like hormonal changes and weak bones are harder to see in boys. Long-distance running and cycling have been linked to these issues.

A doctor's evaluation is important if you see signs for concern. If there is a problem, your son might benefit from a [team approach](#) that addresses his medical, nutritional and possible psychological issues. The team can also determine how best to continue to participate in sports. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends these professionals, rather than a child's coach, to treat [weight gain](#) or loss.

Running, as a weight-bearing exercise and not done at an endurance level, can be good for bone development, but other sports may be just as good or even better for overall and bone health.

One study found that soccer is great because its varied movements—such as sprinting, jumping, and fast changes in direction—stimulate bone growth. Research has also found that handball, judo, basketball and volleyball have similar benefits, especially when started before the teen years.

Note that contact sports, such as football and soccer, bring different concerns, such as the risk of concussion. Head injuries require a specific and immediate protocol to prevent a second injury and possibly permanent damage.

More information: Learn more about sports safety from the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

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