

## **Body Composition: More than just a number**

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Given the landscape of toxic messaging and concerns that there are within Sport (and in wider society), educating and supporting athletes in body composition is crucial for their overall health and performance. Athletes and coaches need to be educated about the importance of body composition, but explanations go beyond just numbers on a scale. Teach them about the different components of body composition, such as muscle mass, body fat percentage, and hydration levels. Making them understand that this is only one part of the performance puzzle. Coaches need to recognise that each athlete is unique and has different goals and needs. Practitioners and coaches work with athletes one-on-one to assess their current body composition and set realistic and healthy goals, help them understand the optimal range for their sport or activity, and guide them on how to achieve it in a sustainable way.

The messaging around eating less and moving more impacts athletes and coaches and this is the go-to message when athletes are attempting to manipulate body composition. It is crucial that an appropriate energy and nutrient intake is emphasized that supports their specific athletic goals. Practitioners in this space need to recognize that body composition can be a sensitive topic for athletes. Encourage a positive mindset and focus on overall health rather than just appearance. Promote body positivity and self-acceptance, emphasizing that body composition is just one aspect of an athlete's performance and should not define their worth. Practitioners and coaches need to work in collaboration with other professionals, such as sports medicine doctors or psychologists, to ensure a holistic approach to athlete support. This interdisciplinary approach can address any underlying issues related to body composition and provide comprehensive care for athletes.

The key is to provide education, support, and personalized guidance to athletes, helping them understand the importance of body composition while promoting a healthy and sustainable approach to achieving their goals.