



SPEED PROJECT

Sport & Prevention of Emerging Eating Disorders

Practical food choices and daily management

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Eating well in real life: a daily challenge



Theory meets practice:

The real challenge is not knowing what to eat, but doing so in daily life — between school, commitments, friends, the canteen, and training.

Eating well does not mean perfection, but finding sustainable solutions that work in the everyday routine.

The goal is not to control every meal, but to help young people recognise which choices contribute to their wellbeing and make them feel better in training.



School cafeterias and meals away from home

Making functional choices outside the home:

Even in canteens or quick meals, good choices are possible:

- Prefer a simple first course + a protein source alongside
- Add a side dish and a piece of fruit
- Always choose water instead of sugary drinks

These small details improve meal quality without complicating life.

Key reminder for coaches:

- What athletes eat at lunch directly affects the quality of their afternoon training.



Snacks: the critical point of the day

Snacks are often improvised:

A pastry, a soft drink, a packaged snack — quick choices, but not always ideal. A poor snack gives an immediate sugar spike followed by a sharp drop just as training begins.

Simple alternatives that work:

- A small sandwich
- A piece of fruit
- A yogurt
- A good-quality cereal and nut bar

These allow the athlete to arrive at training with more consistent energy.



Managing the unexpected: when time is limited

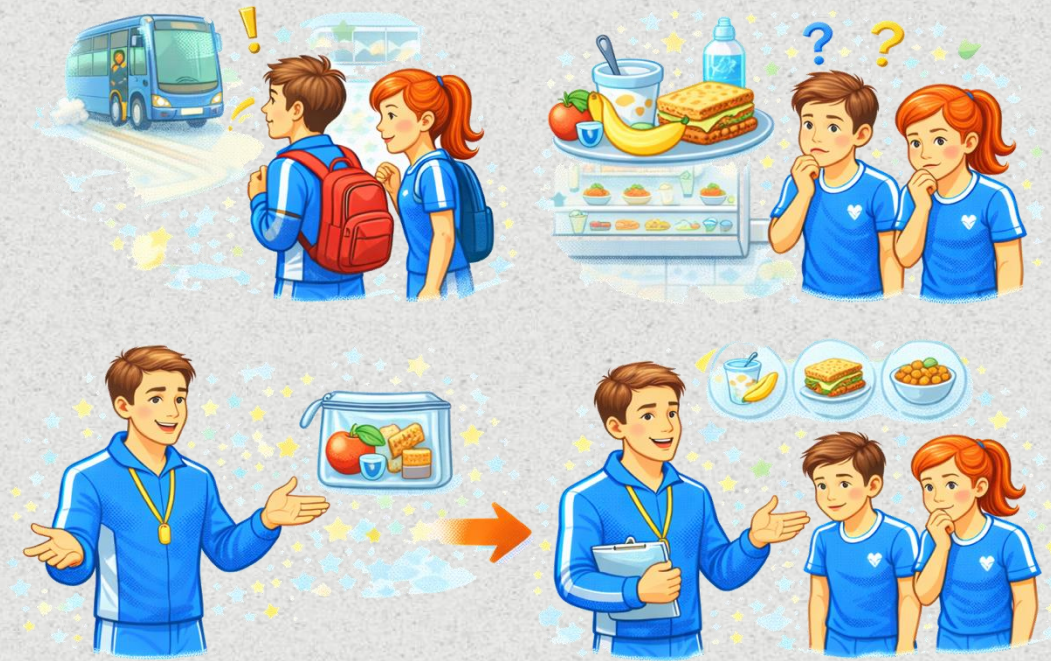
Managing the unexpected is a sporting competency:

Missed buses, lessons finishing late, training brought forward: it is not about 'eating perfectly', but having a plan B.

Practical strategies:

- Carry a simple snack in the bag
- Know what to choose at the sports hall bar
- Recognise which foods are better tolerated before training

These strategies reduce stress and improve the quality of the session.



Social pressure and food: when friends come into play

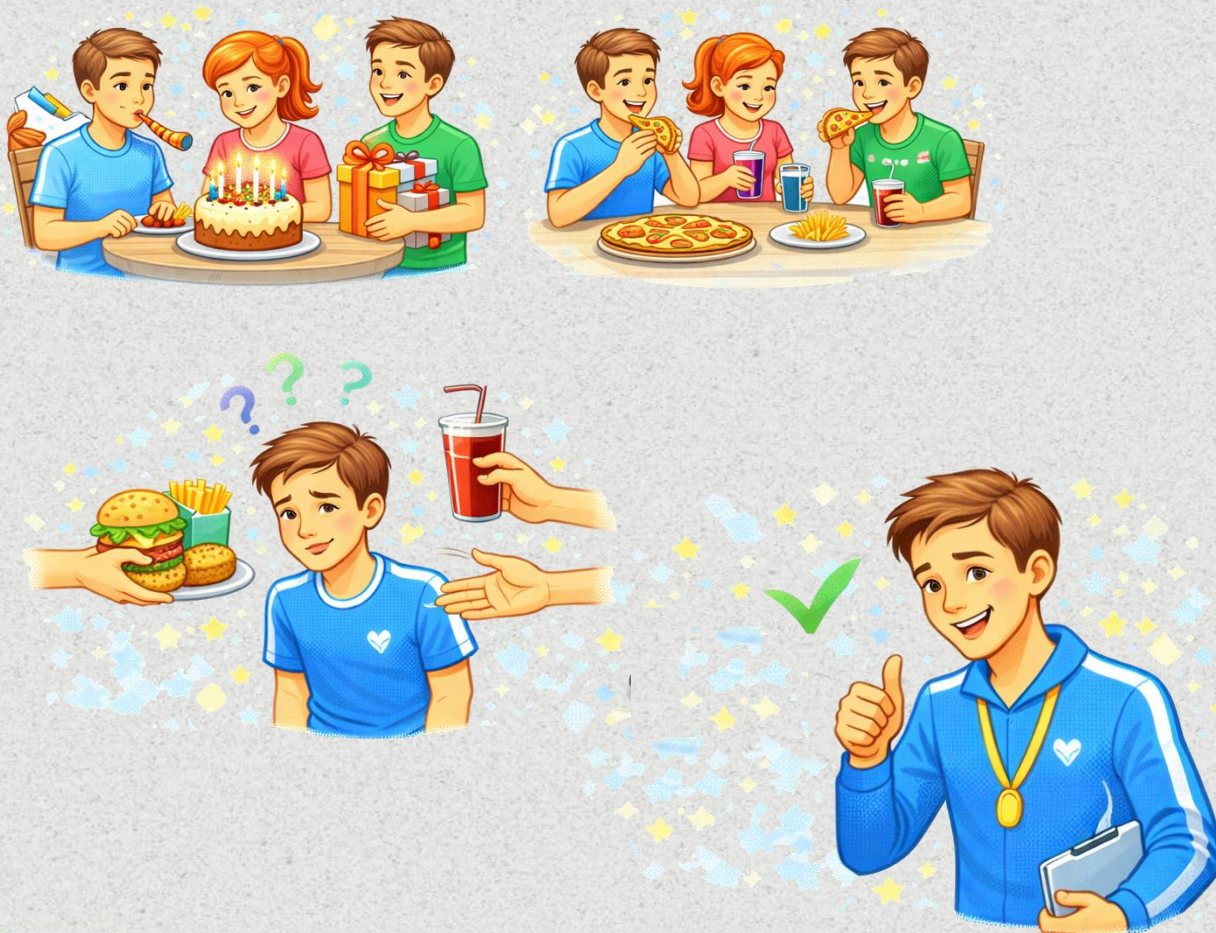
Balance lives in the overall pattern:

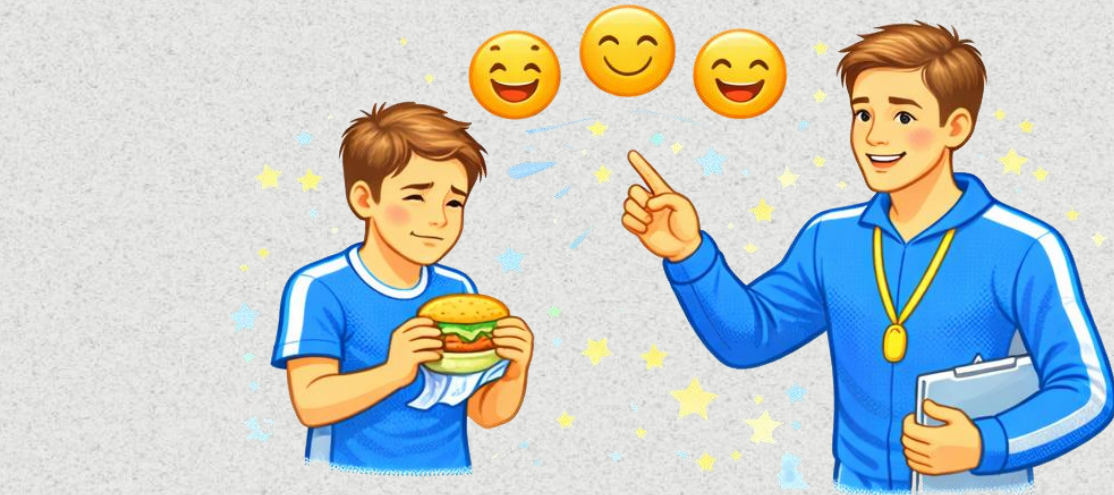
Outings with friends, birthdays, Friday-night pizzas: important moments of socialising that can create doubts for athletes mindful of their relationship with food.

The essential message:

- A balanced diet is not decided in a single meal, but in the overall pattern of habits
- A young person who eats well across the week can freely enjoy these moments without guilt

Food is also enjoyment and sharing. Help athletes keep both.





The coach's role: normalize, simplify, educate

Normalise, simplify, educate:

The coach can help young people relate to food with serenity — without turning it into a task or a source of judgement.

- Normalise mistakes
- Simplify messages
- Guide towards conscious choices

When a young person connects what they eat with how they feel, they have taken an important step towards autonomy — both in sport and in their relationship with food.