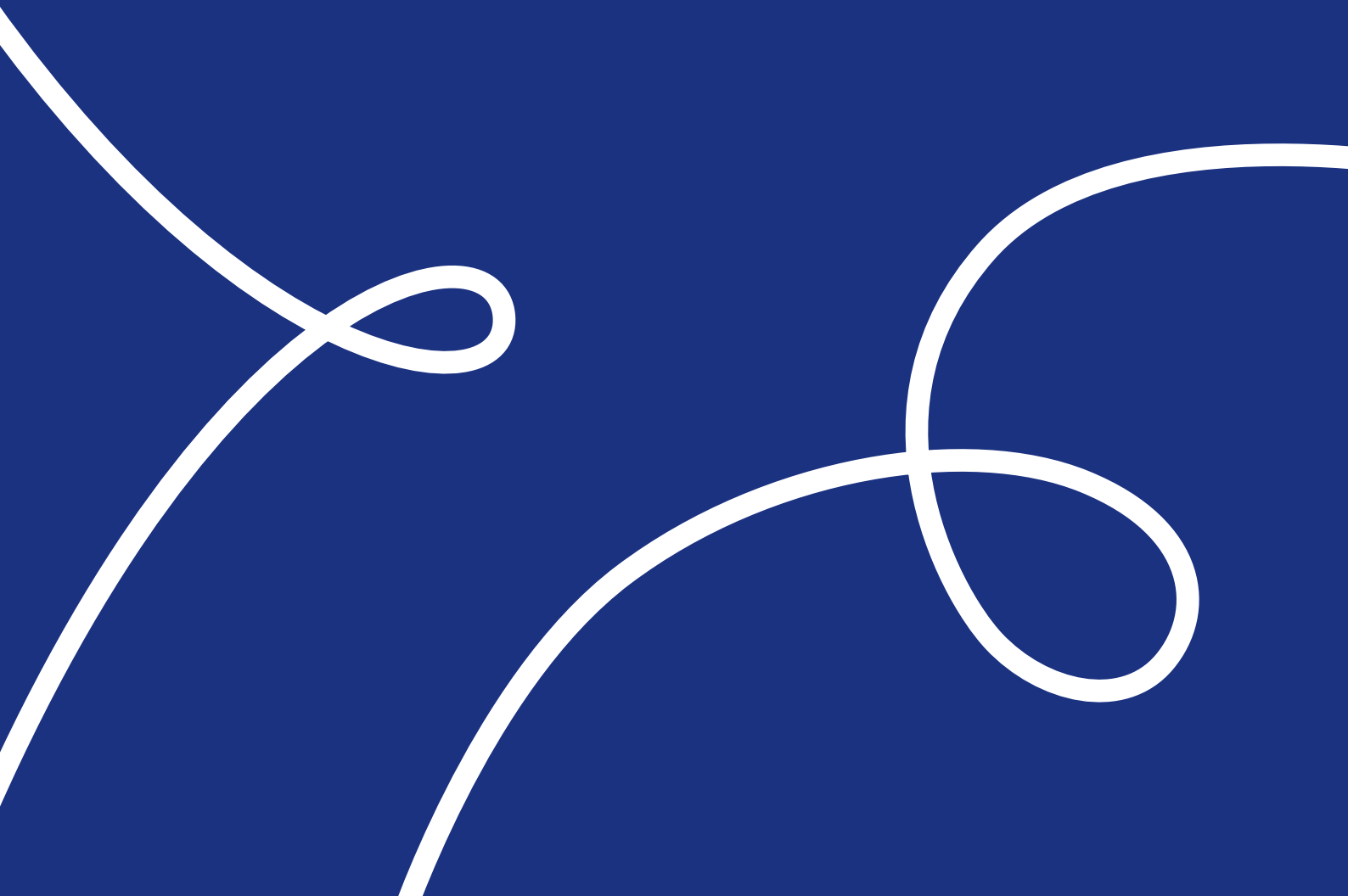




Gymnastics
Australia

Body Positive Guidelines



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Body Positive Guidelines



→ The following Guidelines have been developed by and are endorsed by Gymnastics Australia and aligned to the Disordered Eating Guidelines established by the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) and National Eating Disorder Collaboration (NEDC).

All gymnasts, families, coaches and support staff should have a training and working environment where all bodies are spoken to, about and treated with care and respect.

These Guidelines aim to set clear boundaries on what is acceptable language, communication and behaviour for coaches, parents, support and administrative staff when working with gymnasts of all ages, genders and training levels. These boundaries apply to environments that are inclusive of, but not limited to the daily training environment, National Training Camps, travelling to competitions and at competitions.

These Guidelines are an important tool to facilitate the creation of positive, inclusive and respectful environments for all gymnasts and to directly address the risks of poor body image, disordered eating, eating disorders and mental health issues both during their time as an athlete and / or following their participation in Gymnastics.

Gymnastics Australia acknowledges that shifting one's mindset and language can be a challenge, and it is common to face resistance when staff and stakeholders are asked to consider a new or different approach and way of communicating.

Gymnastics Australia, is committed to furthering its understanding of and implement practises that can improve training and competition environments, with the goal of optimising performance and wellbeing and minimising harm to all gymnasts, staff and the organisation.

Developed in 2019.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Communication and Language



→ All bodies are to be addressed from a place of respect and care, and harmful language is to be avoided.

1. Every reasonable effort must be made to avoid directly critiquing or commenting on the physical form, shape, size or weight of a gymnast, regardless of whether someone feels it may be “true” or “helpful”. Instead, consider ways you can communicate more functional, or supportive messages which encourage all gymnasts to care for and listen to their body.
2. Both praise and criticism for body appearance, shape, size or weight may be harmful, whether directly to a gymnast, in front of them or about them to other people. Avoid commenting on body shape and size, and instead praise skill, function, effort, perseverance or other attributes that are not appearance-based.
3. Conversations about gymnasts’ bodies (regardless of whether this is praise or criticism) in front of other gymnasts, are to be avoided. Comparisons are not constructive and can be harmful to the gymnasts who are being compared, as well as to gymnasts who hear the conversation.
4. Avoid conversations with coaches or other staff about bodies or eating habits (either that of gymnasts, or staff) in front of gymnasts. These conversations, if necessary for performance and / or wellbeing, should be kept private.
5. Consider the delivery of a comment / message may be received differently to how it is intended. Be thoughtful and considerate of the personal circumstances, characteristics and experiences of each individual which may influence their ability to understand the intention of your message.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Food, Eating and Nutrition



→ *Conversations about food and eating should be kept to a reasonable minimum.*

1. Comments regarding food intake i.e. quantity of food or quality of food, should be minimised or avoided by coaches and staff members who do not have any specific training or qualifications in nutrition. It is recommended that these conversations are conducted by a qualified Dietitian who works closely with the club, gymnast and family.
2. Any nutrition information being communicated by an organisation / club (written, verbal) must be evidence-based and sourced from reputable organisations such as the Australian Institute of Sport (ais.gov.au) or Sports Dietitians Australia (sportsdietitians.org) etc.
3. Any conversations or questions about supplementation including vitamins, minerals, powders, drinks or any non-whole food items should be directed to a Sports Dietitian or medical specialist. Do not discuss, or promote supplements of any description to gymnasts.

→ *Nutrition education and advice should be delivered by an experienced Sports Dietitian only.*

1. If you would like to provide your gymnasts and / or gymnast families with evidence-based, age-appropriate nutrition education, it is recommended you seek the services of a qualified Sports Dietitian (see sportsdietitians.org).

RECOMMENDATION 3

Body Weight, Growth and Composition Assessments



→ Gymnastics Australia acknowledges and recognises the potential risks of monitoring body weight, growth and composition.

Any assessment or tracking over time should only be conducted with a clear rationale, alongside carefully assessing risks and benefits to the gymnast.

→ Any monitoring or tracking of a gymnast's body (including weight, height, skinfolds or physique assessments) should only be conducted by an experienced and certified anthropometrist, after both education has been provided and written consent from gymnasts and a parent / guardian has been obtained.

If body weight is being measured for the purposes of growth, height needs to be taken at the same time and at a frequency which offers relevant and appropriate information to support the performance or wellbeing-oriented rationale.

If there are any concerns about a gymnast's body shape, weight or composition, this needs to first be discussed with experienced health professionals before any conversations are conducted with the gymnast and their parents / guardian (if applicable).

Clear lines of communication and a clear reason for intervention are essential to reflect care for the gymnast.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Body Weight, Growth and Composition Assessments



→ *Recommendations:*

1. Consent

- See consent forms Appendices A, B and C.
- Consent for body composition assessment is essential. Both gymnast and a parent / guardian must provide written consent for any gymnast under the age of 18. Only the gymnast must provide consent if they are 18 or over.

2. Education

- Prior to any body composition assessments, an information session is to be held with gymnasts and parents (if gymnasts are under 18) to provide a full explanation and rationale of the process, and to seek fully-informed consent.

3. Privacy

- All gymnasts have the right to privacy and to have a clear understanding about what, who, how and when their personal data is being shared.
- Consent forms must be kept confidentially in a secure, locked location as per Gymnastics Australia's Privacy Policy.

4. Communication

- Body composition assessment results should only be shared with or between coaches if consent from both gymnast and parent (if applicable) is given. Consent must be sought for every new communication which varies from the consent given. E.g. If results are being requested by another health professional.

Examples

→ *How these guidelines may apply to the gymnastics environment.*

1. To support the guidelines around tracking growth and body composition, you may change the language to, “we are tracking growth and body composition to make sure you are growing properly, maximising performance outcomes and reducing the risk of injury.”
2. It is still important for coaches to be able to discuss the dynamics of a gymnast’s body in regards to completing their skills and routines, however, it is crucial this is worded in the correct way. For example, instead of saying, “the reason you were not able to complete your Vault is because you are too heavy.” Consider changing the language and conversation to, “we need to make sure you are physically fit and strong enough to complete your routines confidently and safely.”
3. Your gymnast is performing a skill on the Beam and you would like to provide feedback on their landing technique. Instead of using the words “heavy” to describe the landing, consider other effective coaching techniques. For example, adjustment to body positioning, talk about additional strength development drills that need to be added to their program to assist making the landing easier.
4. Your gymnast appears to be frustrated about lack of skill development and you have noticed some puberty-related body shape changes recently. It may be tempting to consider that the lack of skill development is related to body changes, (which may or may not be the case), and to give the gymnast some feedback about this change.

Instead, aim to consider the common body image difficulties that gymnasts may have already when facing normal pubertal body changes. Try to stay positive, supportive and accepting as the gymnast navigates this period of time. Encourage them to see a sports dietitian and possibly involve a strength and conditioning coach to assist with these changes in the body.

5. Instead of saying a gymnast looks “light” or “lean” or “cut” or “shredded”, choose another way to praise your gymnast. For example, looks “strong” or an attribute such as “you’re looking more confident with that skill at the moment, well done.”

APPENDIX A

Consent Form — Physique Assessment



I, (Full name of parent / guardian if gymnast is under 18, name of gymnast if over 18), acknowledge and agree that:

- a. I have been provided with a copy of the document 'Body Positive Guidelines, which describe physique assessment recommendations. I have read and understood that document;
- b. An appropriate staff member has explained to me in detail the nature of the assessment and I understood their explanation; and
- c. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions, and have received a satisfactory response, about the nature, associated risks and discomforts of each assessment.

I agree that I will:

- a. Present my child (present myself if over 18), for the assessment in a suitable condition and wearing appropriate clothing.
- b. Advise the staff conducting the assessment of: any illness, injury or other physical, mental or medical condition my child / I has / have, that may increase the risk of undertaking the assessment; or if I feel that they / I cannot complete the assessment safely for any other reason.

I understand that my child's / my participation in the assessment is voluntary and that I may withdraw my consent freely and without prejudice (e.g. without limiting future assessment opportunities) at any time before or during the assessment.

I understand that the information obtained during the assessment will be treated confidentially, respecting my child's / my right of privacy. However, I consent to the information being shared as part of a wider performance assessment with my personal coach / s, and parents.

Signature of Athlete:

Parent / Guardian Name (If Athlete is under 18):

Parent / Guardian Signature (If Athlete is under 18):

Date:/...../.....

Developed by Gymnastics Australia Dieticians Group

APPENDIX B

Consent Form — Weights and Heights



- a. I, (Full name of parent / guardian if athlete is under 18) consent for the measurement of weight and height to be completed on my daughter (Name of gymnast).
- b. Consent for the measurement of my weight and height to be completed (If gymnast is over 18) (Name of gymnast).

I understand the following (please tick to indicate understanding):

- the process of taking weight and height (how, when and why it will be done)
- the benefits and risks to my daughter / myself
- how this information will be taken, stored and used both now and in the future
- that I will be informed if / when there are any changes to this process
- that I will be informed if there are any concerns, or queries at any time

I understand that I can withdraw this consent at any time.

Signed (parent / guardian, if gymnast is under 18, gymnast to sign if over 18):

Date: / /

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APPENDIX C

Consent Form — Skinfolding



I, (Full name of parent / guardian if athlete is under 18, gymnast name if over 18).

Consent for the measurement of skinfolding to be completed: (Name of gymnast).

I understand that skinfolds will be taken in the following manner (to be completed by qualified Anthropometrist completing the measurements);

Frequency:

Location:

Anthropometrist(s):

I understand the following (please tick to indicate understanding):

- the process of skinfolding (how, when and why it will be done)
- the benefits and risks involved
- how this information will be taken, stored and used both now and in the future
- that I will be informed if / when there are any changes to this process
- that I will be informed if there are any concerns, or queries at any time

I understand that I can withdraw this consent at any time.

Signed (parent / guardian, if gymnast is under 18, gymnast to sign if over 18):

Date:/...../.....

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