

THE CAMOGIE ASSOCIATION



THE  
CAMOGIE  
ASSOCIATION  
An Cumann Camógachta

# PLAYER WELFARE



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# SECTION 1: Injury Prevention and Concussion



## *Injury Prevention Programme*

Welcome to the Camogie Injury Prevention Programme. This programme is an injury prevention warm-up based on the GAA Activate Warm-up. It was developed by researchers in Dublin City University School of Health and Human Performance led by Dr Siobhán O'Connor in collaboration with the Camogie Association.

## *Programme Layout*

The programme consists of three phases. Phase one is composed of running, cutting and landing exercises, phase two is composed of strength plyometrics and balance exercises and phase three is composed of agility and power exercises. In phases one and three, coaches should encourage players to move in multiple directions and include sport specific skills throughout e.g. striking, hand-passing and roll/jab lift.



## Camogie Injury Prevention Programme

### PHASE 1: RUNNING, CUTTING AND LANDING MECHANICS

	Reps	Out	In
1	2 reps	Jog (focusing on upper body technique)	A Skip
2	2 reps	½ Pace Run (focusing on lower body technique)	Ice Hockey Stop
3	2 reps	Jump, Catch and Land	Pick Ups
4	2 reps	Partner Shuffle	Lunge Stops
5	2 reps	Slow Plant & Cut	Squat Stops

### PHASE 2: STRENGTH, PLYOMETRICS AND BALANCE

Alternate between Circuits 1 and 2 on a monthly basis

	Reps	Circuit 1	Reps	Circuit 2
1	5 reps per leg	Arabesque	5 reps per leg	Arabesque
2	10 swings each side	Leg Swings (front)	10 swings each side	Leg Swings (lateral)
3	10 reps – 5 reps each leg	Partner Push into Lunge (straight)	10 reps	Partner Push into Lunge (multi-directional)
4	5 reps initially (increasing to 10)	Nordic Hamstring Curl	5 reps initially (increasing to 10)	Nordic Hamstring Curl
5	Hold of 10s (increasing to 30s)	Front Plank	10 reps holding for 2 secs	Front Plank with Leg Lift
6	10 reps each side	Side Plank with leg lift – bent knee	10 reps each side	Side Plank with leg lift – straight leg
7	5 reps per leg	Split Leg Squats	10 reps	Scissor Jumps
8	5 reps per leg	Lateral Hop and Hold	5 reps per leg	Diagonal Hop and Hold
9	10 reps	Prisoner Squats	10 reps	Prisoner Squats
10	10 reps	Counter Movement Jump	10 reps	Counter Movement Jump with a Twist

### PHASE 3: AGILITY & POWER

	Reps	Out	In
1	2 reps	¾ Pace Run	High Skip
2	2 reps	2 Forwards 1 Back	Bounds
3	2 reps	Fast Plant & Cut with Ball	One on One
4	10 reps	Fast Feet Shuffle: Front to Back (Two legs)	Fast Feet Shuffle: right to left (single leg)
5	5 reps each leg	Dynamic Lunge	

For more information on the Camogie Injury Prevention Programme please see <https://learning.gaa.ie/camogieinjuryprevention>

## ***Camogie Early, Rapid and Mature Movers Programmes***

### ***Introduction:***

The Camogie Early Movers (Under 8 – Under 12), Rapid Movers (Under 13 and Under 14), and Mature Movers (Under 15 and Under 16) Programmes are warm-ups designed for underage Camogie players. These warm-up exercises help players build strength, coordination and develop good movement patterns, providing them with a solid foundation of movement that is specific to each stage of their physical development based on the Long-Term Player-Athlete Development Model. The exercises are not seen as a replacement for current warm-up procedures, rather it is suggested that the exercises can be introduced over time as deemed appropriate by the coach. They target specific windows of trainability for each age group and provide a framework in which players can progressively work towards being equipped to complete the full Camogie Injury Prevention Programme (described above).

**The full programme is completed by players from Under 17 up.** It is important to note that, as players mature at different rates, coaches are encouraged to implement the programme as they deem most appropriate for their players.

There are three age-specific adapted versions also available:

- 1. The Camogie Early Movers Programme (Under 8 - Under 12)**
- 2. The Camogie Rapid Movers (Under 13 and Under 14)**
- 3. The Camogie Mature Movers (Under 15 and Under 16)**

These age-specific programmes have been tailored to match the developmental needs of underage Camogie players and it is encouraged that they are made as fun as possible to increase player engagement.

## The Camogie Early Movers Programme (Under 8 - Under 12)

### PHASE 1

Exercise	Sample Cue for Children
Jog	"Run on hot ground"
A-March	"March like a soldier"
½ Pace Jog	"Run on lava"
Ice Hockey Stop	"Stop like an ice hockey player"
Jump, catch and land*	"Jump and land on a horse"
Pick ups	"Dig up the ground"
Partner Shuffle	"Walk like a crab"
Lunge Stops	"Walk like a robot"
Slow plant and cut	"Walk like an astronaut"
Squat Stops	"Lay an egg"

\*progress to include catching

### PHASE 2

Exercise	Sample Cue for Children
Arabesque	"Pretend you're an aeroplane"
Leg Swings (Front)	"Cut the grass with your foot"
Leg Swings (Side)	"Cut the grass with your foot"
Lateral Hop and Hold	"Stuck in the mud"

### PHASE 3

Exercise	Sample Cue for Children
¾ Pace Run	"Run with rockets on your feet"
High Skips	"Skip to the sky"
2 Forward, 1 Back	"Rocket racers"
Fast Foot Shuffle (Front)	"Itchy Feet"

**What are the aims for this group?**

- Build the mechanics of good movement while incorporating basic object control.
- Ensure that the programme is kept fun throughout. This can be done by making exercise descriptions simpler such as 'laying an egg' rather than 'squat stop' and limiting the amount of time spent explaining the exercise to your players.

**What does the Early Movers Programme do?**

- Emphasises fundamental movement and sports skills
- These phases occurs during a window of accelerated adaption to motor co-ordination training in young players between the ages of 8-11. Emphasising these skills at this age helps develop young players' overall movement quality and sport-specific skill levels.

**How do you coach it?**

- It is important that these phases are fun.
- Continuous exercises without specified reps should be done for a moderate period of time – about 10-15 seconds or to your own discretion. A repetition or rep is one successful completion of an exercise. So for the squat stop there are two reps meaning you do two squats fully.
- It is recommended that you gradually introduce the programme phase by phase to allow you and your players to become accustomed to it.
- Use simple instructions or cues that describe good technique for that exercise. Too much information to players in this age group will decrease their engagement and interest.
- Make sure to adapt it to your group. The exercises below are rough guidelines but the best judgement of what will be suitable to a group is your own knowledge of their skill and maturity levels so the exercises and coaching style can be adjusted to this accordingly.

## The Camogie Rapid Movers Programme (Under 13 and Under 14)

### PHASE 1 – As above

### PHASE 2 – Early Movers Plus the Following

Exercise	Sample Cue for Children
Side Plank	"Pretend you're a Starfish"
Diagonal Hop and Hold	"Stuck in the Mud"
Counter Movement Jump	"Jump on a Trampoline"

### PHASE 3 – Early Movers Plus the Following

Exercise	Sample Cue for Children
Two Foot Bounds	"Jump/Bound like a Rabbit"
Fast Plant and Cut	"Run like a ninja"
One on One	"Show n' go"
Fast Foot Shuffle (Side)	"Hot Potato"

### What are the aims for this group?

- Build the mechanics of good movement and strength while incorporating basic object control.
- Ensure that the programme is kept fun throughout. This can be done by making exercise descriptions simpler such as 'laying an egg' and limiting the amount of time spent explaining the exercise to your players.

### What does the Rapid Movers Programme do?

- Emphasises early strength training while incorporating fundamental movement and sports skills.
- This phase occurs at the beginning of a window of accelerated adaption to strength and aerobic training.
- Skill and speed is also maintained or further developed at this phase.

### How does it differ from the Early Movers Programme?

- At this age we are still looking to keep the warm-up fun and engaging, but we are also looking to incorporate more strength training. There are six additional exercises implemented at this age.

**How do you coach it?**

- It is important that this phase is fun. At the Under 12 age group although players are maturing we want to stay on the fun side of training to keep them interested and engaged.
- Continuous exercises without specified reps should be done for a moderate period of time – about 10-15 seconds or to your own discretion. A repetition or rep is one successful completion of an exercise. So for the squat stop there are two reps meaning you do two squats fully.
- It is recommended that you gradually introduce the programme phase by phase to allow you and your players to become accustomed to it.
- Use simple instructions or cues that describe good technique for that exercise. Too much information to players in this age group will decrease their engagement and interest.
- Make sure to adapt it to your group. The exercises below are rough guidelines but the best judgement of what will be suitable to a group is your own knowledge of their skill and maturity levels so the exercises and coaching style can be adjusted to this accordingly.



## The Camogie Mature Movers Programme (Under 15 and Under 16)

The Camogie Mature Movers Programme is a functional movement programme based on the Activate\* Warm-up. This takes fifteen minutes and can be done before all training and matches as part of your warm-up. The programme is done with helmets on and where possible with hurley in hand. In this example, the programme was completed inside a 20 x 20 metre square, but the size and number of squares is flexible to the number of players in your group. In between exercises in phases 1 and 3 players move in multiple directions around the square. Coaches should encourage players to include sport specific skills throughout e.g. striking, hand-passing and roll/jab lift. The Camogie Mature Movers Programme is a sample recommendation of exercises that may be suitable for the Under 15 and under 16 age groups. This breakdown is based on the player pathway and long-term player-athlete development programme.

The injury prevention programme consists of three phases:



**NOTE: Phase 2 should not be done before matches**

### What are the aims for this group?

- Optimise and progress strength and aerobic training
- Begin to introduce structure and format to the warm-up
- Progress speed and skill training

**What does the Mature Movers Programme do?**

- Optimises and develops further strength and aerobic training
- Players come to the end of the window of accelerated adaption for strength and aerobic training at this age. By emphasising this, we optimise players' physical development.
- Skill and speed is also maintained or further developed at this phase.

**How does it differ from the Rapid Movers Programme?**

- At this age group we begin to make the warm-up more structured throughout. We move away from making exercises fun to a more rigid programme. We also continue to build on the strength and aerobic training we did before. There are five additional exercises in this phase.

**How do you coach it?**

- Give the players full instructions and continue to give cues and directions the entire time they are doing each exercise. Make the warm-up more structured and focused as we move away from training with an emphasis on fun.
- Give regular feedback to players throughout the warm-up to maintain good technique for all exercises.
- Continuous exercises without specified reps should be done for a moderate period of time – about 10-15 seconds or to your own discretion. A repetition, or rep, is one successful completion of an exercise. So for the 'squat stop' there are two reps meaning you do two squats fully.
- It is recommended that you gradually introduce the programme phase by phase to allow you and your players to become accustomed to it.
- Make sure to adapt it to your group. The exercises below are rough guidelines but the best judgement of what will be suitable to a group is your own knowledge of their skill and maturity levels so the exercises and coaching style can be adjusted to this accordingly.

## Phase 1: Running, cutting and landing mechanics

**Jog** 10-15 seconds**Instructions:**

Jog on the balls of your feet and move around the square

**Watch out for:** Players running in circles and not all around the square

**A-March** 10-15 seconds**Instructions:**

With high knees and arms march on the balls of your feet

**Watch out for:** Players struggling to move opposite arms and legs—this must be corrected

**½ Pace Jog** 10-15 seconds**Instructions:**

Run on the balls of your feet staying tall throughout

**Watch out for:** Players heel-striking while running—this should be corrected

**Ice Hockey Stop** 2 each leg**Instructions:**

Stop with your feet wide, bend one knee and sit back. Put your weight through the lunging foot, hold for one second.

**Watch out for:** Players rounding their back, ensure knee is bent and player is sitting back

**Jump, Catch, Land** 10-15 seconds**Instructions:**

Jump in the air to catch a high ball and land with bent ankles, knees and hips

**Watch out for:** Players' knees caving in, players landing with very straight legs—extremely important that this is corrected

**Pick-Ups** 10-15 seconds**Instructions:**

Bend over and jab lift or roll lift the sliotar, you should feel a gentle stretch in your hamstring

**Watch out for:** Player's with poor lifting technique

**Partner Shuffle** 10-15 seconds**Instructions:**

Side-step around partner with knees slightly bent, stay facing the whole way the entire time

**Watch out for:** Knees caving in as players sidestep. Players facing forwards rather than sideways.

**Lunge Stops** 2 each leg**Instructions:**

On your call, drop into a quick lunge. Keep knees and hips at right angles. Hold for one second.

**Watch out for:** Knees caving in or rounding in the lower back

**Slow Plant & Cut** 10-15 seconds**Instructions:**

Pick a spot on the ground, bend your knee over your toe, drop opposite shoulder and change direction

**Watch out for:** Knees caving in, cutting off the wrong foot—must be corrected

**Squat Stop** 2 reps**Instructions:**

On your call, players lower into a squat. Keep knees straight over the toes and sit back into the squat. Hold for one second

**Watch out for:** Players rounding their backs, knees caving in.

**Phase 2: Strength, Plyometrics and Balance****Arabesque** 5 Each Leg

**Instruction:** Focusing on your balance, keep hips level and tilt backwards. At end range pull back upright using the hamstrings

**Watch out for:** Players rounding their lower back rather than hinging from hips

**Leg Swings (Front)** 10 Each Leg**Instructions:**

Face opposite directions holding shoulders, swing your inside leg back then kick up into your hand

**Watch out for:** Player's not kicking inside leg/opposite arm

**Leg Swings (Side)** 10 Each Leg



**Instructions:**  
Stand behind partner and hold onto shoulders, swing your legs across your body

**Watch out for:**  
Players moving upper body rather than hips

**Partner Push into Lunge** 5 Each Leg



**Instructions:**  
Push partner gently in the back. Drop into a lunge keeping knees and hips at 90 degrees and upper body upright

**Watch out for:**  
Knee caving in, knee hitting off the floor in the lunge

**Diagonal Push into Lunge** 5 Each Leg



**Instructions:**  
Push your partner gently in a diagonal direction. When receive a push drop into a lunge keeping your knee in line with the toes

**Watch out for:** Knee caving in, players who fail to control the push

**Front Plank** 10 Second Hold



**Instructions:**  
Put your hands straight underneath shoulders and keep your body in a straight line. Tighten glutes and core

**Watch out for:** Players who cannot stabilise through their core and lower back. These players must be regressed to an easier version

**Side Plank** 10 Second Hold Each Leg



**Instructions:**  
Bend knee to 90 degrees and rest on elbow., keep backside tucked in and head back.

**Watch out for:**  
Players bodies not in a straight line, hip dropping down—must be regressed to an easier exercise

**Split Squat** 5 Each Leg



**Instructions:**  
Starting in a semi-lunge position, drop your back knee towards the ground. Keep hips and knees at 90 degrees

**Watch out for:**  
Players without the strength to keep knee off the ground

**Lateral Hop and Hold** 5 Each Leg**Instructions:**

Jump side to side landing on a bent knee, stick the landing and propel to the other side

**Watch out for:** Knee caving in on landing

**Diagonal Hop and Hold** 5 Each Leg**Instructions:**

Jump diagonally landing on a bent knee, stick the landing and propel back to the start position

**Watch out for:** Knee caving in on landing

**Counter Movement Jump** 5 reps**Instructions:**

From a semi-squat position keep feet hip width distance apart and use your arms to jump high in the air

**Watch out for:** Knees coming together on jumping or landing

**Phase 3: Agility and Power** **$\frac{3}{4}$  Pace Run** 10-15 seconds**Instructions:**

Run on the balls of your feet staying tall throughout.

**Watch out for:**

Players running at too slow a pace, heel striking

**High Skips** 10-15 seconds**Instructions:**

Moving opposite arms and legs skip high in the air

**Watch out for:**

Players not jumping high enough— encourage explosive jumps

**2 Forward 1 Back** 2 reps**Instructions:**

Sprint out 2 meters, chop your feet and backpedal 1 meter then run on

**Watch out for:**

Players running in the wrong direction

**2 Foot Bounds** 2 reps**Instructions:**

With your whole foot, land on the ground and jump out as far as you can three times

**Watch out for:**

Knee caving in on landing

**Fast Plant and Cut** 2 reps each leg



**Instructions:**  
At speed, plant your foot in the ground, bend the knee over the toes and change direction

**Watch out for:**  
Knee caving in while changing direction

**One on One** 2 reps each leg



**Instructions:**  
Side-step off one leg to beat your defender

**Watch out for:**  
Knee caving in while changing direction

**Fast Foot Shuffle Front** 10 reps



**Instructions:**  
On balls of the feet shuffle back and forth as fast as possible

**Watch out for:**  
Players knees knocking together

**Fast Foot Shuffle Side** 5 reps each leg



**Instructions:**  
On one foot, shuffle side to side as fast as possible

**Watch out for:**  
Knee caving in, player not staying upright

**Dynamic Lunge** 5 reps each leg

**Instructions:**

Jump forward, landing with a bent knee spring back as fast as you can and land where you started

**Watch out for:**

Big impacts on landing, landing with a straight leg, knee caving inwards

## Summary Table:

Exercise selections for phase two and three of the Camogie Early Movers (EM), Camogie Rapid Movers (RM) and Camogie Mature Movers (MM) Programmes.

**Note** – The entirety of Phase 1 is used in all three programmes

PHASE 2			
Exercise	EM	RM	MM
Arabesque	•	•	•
Leg Swing (Front)	•	•	•
Leg Swing (Side)	•	•	•
Partner Push into Lunge			•
Diagonal Push into Lunge			•
Front Plank			•
Side Plank		•	•
Split Squat			•
Lateral Hop and Hold	•	•	•
Diagonal Hop and Hold		•	•
Counter Movement Jump		•	•
PHASE 3			
¾ Pace Run	•	•	•
High Skips	•	•	•
2 Forwards 1 Back		•	•
2 Foot Bounds		•	•
Fast Plant and Cut		•	•
One on One	•	•	•
Fast Foot Shuffle (Front)		•	•
Fast Foot Shuffle (Side)			•
Dynamic Lunge			•

For more information on the Camogie Injury Prevention Programme please see <https://learning.gaa.ie/camogieinjuryprevention>

## Recovery for Camogie Players

■ by Ristead Byrne

**What is Fatigue?** Fatigue is an important and necessary result of training where we experience a temporary decrease in physical and psychological performance following a training session. If a training session is at a sufficient intensity it pushes our body beyond its normal capacity into an overloaded state. Recovery from this overload in turn results in an increase in fitness or adaptation.

**What is Adaptation?** Adaptation is our body's ability to increase its capacity for work in response to a training stimulus – as a result we increase our fitness. In order to maximise adaptation from training athletes must recover adequately.

**What is Recovery?** Recovery is our ability to return to a state where we can function and perform optimally.

**Why is Recovery Important** An imbalance between training load and recovery can result in an unwanted fatigued state and a reduction in physical and psychological performance. This can manifest in a decrease in an athlete's ability to perform on the pitch or the perception that more effort is required to produce that same performance.

Poor recovery can result in a decrease in neuromuscular function which can lead to an increased risk of injury, if this is prolonged it can result in immune-function suppression which can increase an athlete's susceptibility to illness.

If this imbalance between training load and recovery persists over a long period of time it can result in decrements in physical and psychological performance and can ultimately (in rare cases) result in overtraining syndrome.

### Recovery Strategies

Cornerstones of Good Recovery
Refuel + Rehydrate
Sleep
Avoid Alcohol

**Refuel** – Foods containing protein and carbohydrate should be consumed within 30 minutes following exercise. An athlete's diet should contain enough nutrients in the form of carbohydrate, protein, fat, vitamins and minerals to sustain normal bodily functions and to allow for optimal performance and recovery from training and competition.

### Guidelines for athletes:

Protein 1.2-1.7 g/kg body weight per day for strength and endurance athletes.

Carbohydrate: 5-8g per kg bodyweight per day depending on daily energy expenditure.

Fat: While carbohydrate and protein intake should be favoured immediately post-exercise daily fat intake for athletes should be 20-35% of total energy intake and fat intake should not decrease below 20% of total energy intake.



A good example of a post-training recovery snack is Chocolate Milk within 30 minutes of your session. This is hydrating, contains simple carbohydrates and good quality protein which is easily absorbed after training. This should be followed up with a main meal ideally within 2 hours and continued hydration.

**Rehydrate** – The replacement of fluids and electrolytes lost during exercises is important in the immediate post exercise period. Urine clarity may serve as the most practical method to evaluate hydration status. Drinking alcohol dehydrates you further and can impair muscle recovery and therefore adaptation to training.

**Sleep** is extremely important for our health and is among the most powerful tools we have for recovery. It is widely

advocated as a cornerstone for an athlete's recovery from training.

Checklist for Good Sleep
1. Quiet environment – Consider earplugs if needed.
2. Cool room temperature 18°C.
3. Consistent Routine: Stick to the same time to fall asleep and to wake up.
4. Avoid caffeine for 6hrs pre bed.
5. Avoid using screens before sleeping.
6. Aim for a minimal of 7hrs per night. Some people will benefit from up to 9hrs.
7. Ensure room is completely dark – Consider using an eye mask.

### Other Strategies for recovery

**Compression garments:** Wear for at least 12 hours post exercise to reduce the severity of muscle soreness and accelerate the recovery of muscle function following strenuous exercise.

**Cold water immersion:** During intense periods of competition with games in quick succession or for athletes who play multiple sports, cold water immersion can help with short term recovery. However, this can negatively affect some of the longer-term benefits from training so may only be suitable for occasional use.

- Up to 15 minutes at a temperature of 10-15°C after intense exercise has been shown to be effective.



**Active Recovery:** Low intensity aerobic exercise can be used following intense exercise to increase blood flow around the body and can help speed up recovery. This is usually completed the day after intense exercise and can be for as little as 20 minutes.

- 20 minutes easy bike riding or water-based activity such as jogging in water or light swimming can be effective

**Psychological recovery:** Our psychological and physiological systems can influence each other. A holistic view of recovery will consider training, competition load and other life demands including what happens away from training and matches. Highly competitive training and matches as well as other stressful life events can be psychologically fatiguing. It is important that an athlete can switch off and engage in other restful activities.

#### Sample Post match recovery plan:

1. Rehydrate + Refuel
2. Compression Garments
3. Avoid Alcohol
4. Good sleep
5. Next day active recovery in pool for 20mins

## Concussion 'If in Doubt, Sit Them Out' Concussion Management Guidelines



### What is Concussion?

Concussion is a brain injury and can be caused by a direct or indirect hit to the player's head or body. Concussion typically results in an immediate onset of short-lived signs and symptoms. However, in some cases, the signs and symptoms of concussion may evolve over several minutes or hours or even days. Concussion must be taken extremely seriously as there is potential for catastrophic brain injury with children and adolescents at most risk.

The Camogie Association reaffirms its position that if there are any signs leading to a suspicion of a concussion for a player,

at any level or any age, the player should be removed immediately from play, and not return to action on the same day (the impact itself may on occasion be considered an indicator in this context, even in the absence of any immediate symptoms).

The player should be medically assessed and not return to full contact play without prior medical approval - "If In Doubt, Sit Them Out". In fact, research has shown that by withdrawing a player from play immediately following a potential concussive impact, this reduced the players' recovery time when compared with those who remained in games and required a longer spell out of action before making a full recovery.

This document sets out the Camogie Association, GAA and LGFA Guidelines in relation to Concussion Management. The following recommendations are not protocols or a clinical standard of care.

### Summary Principles

- Concussion is a brain injury that needs to be taken seriously to protect the short and long-term health and welfare of all players.
- If there are any signs leading to the suspicion of concussion, a player should be removed immediately from the field of play pending a full medical assessment (the impact itself may on occasion be considered an indicator even in the absence of any immediate symptoms). A player suspected

of having sustained a concussion should not return to play on the same day. Subsequently a satisfactory, supervised return to play protocol must be completed, followed by medical approval, prior to return to play. If In Doubt, Sit Them Out.

- Where a Team Doctor is present, he/she must advise the person in charge of the team (i.e. Team Manager) in this regard and the player must not be allowed to continue their participation in the game.
- Concussion diagnosis is a clinical judgement – Use of the SCAT 5 can aid the doctor in his/her diagnosis. If a full SCAT 5 assessment has been deemed necessary, the player should not return to play on the day.
- Concussion is an evolving injury. It is important to monitor the player after the injury for 24-48 hours.
- All players suspected of having a concussion, must have adequate rest (no activity) of at least 48 hours and then must follow a gradual return to play (GRTP) protocol. Players must receive written medical clearance (from a doctor) and present to the person in charge of the team before returning to full contact training. Players should not return to full contact training/matches for at least 15 days from when the injury has first been diagnosed. (It is recommended that the GRTP should take at least 14 days.)
- Over the past decade, there is evidence to suggest that female players can be more susceptible to concussion. There is also evidence to suggest that recovery can take longer, and female athletes can also be more prone to second impact syndrome, which is potentially fatal in particular during adolescence (Dick, 2009; Collins & Kontos, 2016). In the interest of their long-term welfare, camogie and ladies football players are advised to follow the GRTP protocol.
- A graduated return to school/ education strategy is also necessary. Communication between the doctor, parents and teachers is essential so that a flexible individualised plan allowing incremental progression from daily activities, school activities, return to school part time and return to school full time be implemented. No player should return to competitive sporting activity prior to being cleared to return to school.
- The vast majority of players can be managed locally by a doctor with the necessary skillsets, for example GP, Sports Medicine Doctor or Team Doctor.
- A minority of players with prolonged symptoms (greater than 4 weeks for under-18s or greater than 10-14 days for adult players, players with recurrent injuries or experiencing educational difficulties) should be referred to an appropriate specialist or multidisciplinary clinic.
- All coaches should be made aware by players and/or parents if a player under their care has received a concussion in another sport/event.
- In children and adolescents, there is a risk of catastrophic injury from second impact syndrome if players are returned to play before they are recovered from concussion.

## Signs and Symptoms

Contrary to popular belief, most (over 90%) concussions occur without a loss of consciousness and so it is important to recognise the other signs and symptoms. Concussion must be recognised as an evolving injury in the acute stage.

Some symptoms may develop immediately while other symptoms may appear gradually over time. Monitoring of players - minutes, hours and days - after the injury is therefore an important aspect of concussion management.

## DIAGNOSIS OF ACUTE CONCUSSION SHOULD INVOLVE THE FOLLOWING:



1. Player's subjective report of her symptoms.
2. Observation of the player for physical signs of concussion.
3. Assessment of the player for cognitive change or decline.
4. Observation of players for behavioural change.
5. Players' report of any sleep disturbance.



## Signs and Symptoms

INDICATORS	WHAT YOU WOULD EXPECT TO SEE
Symptoms	Headaches* Dizziness 'Feeling in a fog.' Fatigue Sensitivity to light or noise
Physical Signs	Loss of consciousness Vomiting Vacant Facial Expression Clutching Head Balance Disturbance (ataxia / unsteadiness) Motor In coordination Slurred speech
Cognitive Impairment	Loss short term memory Difficulty with concentration Decreased attention Diminished work performance
Behavioural Changes	Irritability Anger Mood Swings Feeling Nervous Anxious Sadness or Depression Withdrawal
Sleep Disturbance	Drowsiness Difficulty Falling Asleep

\*Most common symptom

## Return to Play (RTP)

A player with a suspected/ concussion should NEVER be allowed to return to play on the day of injury. In addition, return to play must follow a medically supervised stepwise approach and a player SHOULD NEVER return to play while symptomatic. A graded program of exertion prior to medical clearance and return to play (GRTP) is generally recommended.

### GRTP for All Players

Rehabilitation Stage	Functional Exercise at Each Stage of Rehabilitation	Objective of Each Stage
1. No Activity for a minimum of 48 hours	Physical and Cognitive Rest	Recovery
2. Light Activity (at least 4 days)	Walking, swimming, cycling, keeping intensity <70% maximum permitted heart rate - (If Activity does worsen symptoms or bring on further symptoms return to previous stage. If no symptoms progress to next stage)	Increase HR
3. Sports Specific Exercise (at least 4 days)	Running drills - (If Activity does worsen symptoms or bring on further symptoms return to previous stage. If no symptoms progress to next stage)	Add Movement
4. No Contact Training Drills (at least 4 days)	Progress to more complex training drills- passing drills, progressive resistance training - (If Activity does worsen symptoms or bring on further symptoms return to previous stage. If no symptoms progress to next stage)	Exercise, coordination and cognitive load
5. Full Contact Practice (at least 1 day)	<b>Following written medical clearance,</b> participate in normal training activities. (If Activity does worsen symptoms or bring on further symptoms return to previous stage. If no symptoms progress to next stage)	Restore confidence and assess functional skills by coaching staff
6. Return to play (Minimum of at least 15 days since diagnosis)	Normal game play	Return to competitive action.

*If any increase in/development of further symptoms occur while in the RTP program, then the player should drop back to the previous asymptomatic level and try to progress again after a further 24 hours period of rest has passed*

### Graduated return to education strategy

Concussion may affect the ability to learn at school (or college). Initially, the player may need to miss a few days of school, followed by a gradual return, avoiding activities that exacerbate symptoms.

MENTAL ACTIVITY	ACTIVITY AT EACH STEP	GOAL OF EACH STEP
Daily activities that do not give the athlete symptoms	Typical activities that the athlete does during the day as long as they do not increase symptoms (e.g. reading, texting, screen time). Start with 5-15 minutes at a time and gradually build up.	Gradual return to typical activities.
School activities	Homework, reading or other cognitive activities outside of the classroom.	Increase tolerance to cognitive work.
Return to school full-time	Gradual introduction of schoolwork. May need to start with a partial school day or with increased breaks during the day.	Increase academic activities.
Return to school full-time	Gradually progress school activities until a full day can be tolerated.	Return to full academic activities and catch up on missed work.



## Helping Players Cope with a Concussion Injury

Players often feel tired and may experience difficulties at work or school when carrying out a task which requires concentration. Players may also encounter mood difficulties and feel depressed, anxious or irritable with family or team mates. The following actions can help players cope:

- Once symptoms initially resolve a light exercise programme (See GRTP) appears to speed up recovery.
- Support should be provided to players during this recovery period. Parents, Coaches and Team-mates should reassure the player to follow the recovery protocols and ask the player if he has any questions or concerns regarding the injury. The player should be included in social activities which do not put the player at risk of a further concussion.
- Alcohol should be avoided as it may delay recovery and put the player at increased risk for further injury.
- Minimise exposure to TV, PC, Laptops, Smartphone, Tablet, Video Games etc These items should be avoided two hours before sleep as they can cause sleep disturbance.
- Sleep disturbance is common and hence restoring normal sleep patterns and Circadian rhythms is essential. Napping is generally not recommended during recovery from concussion, as it can disrupt the circadian cycle of sleep and wakefulness.
- Attention to hydration and nutrition is important (dehydration exacerbates and prolongs headaches and other symptoms).
- When dealing with persistent symptoms, it is essential that players only take medications prescribed by their doctor.
- Recovery from concussion should not be rushed nor pressure applied to players to resume playing until recovery is complete. The risk of re injury is high and may lead to recurrent concussion injuries. – “It is better to have missed one game than the whole season.”
- Remember in children and adolescents, there is a risk of catastrophic injury from second impact if players are returned before they have recovered.



**REMEMBER  
FULL  
RECOVERY  
IS POSSIBLE!**

# SECTION 2: Nutrition and Lifestyle



## Nutrition

■ by Kate McDaid

It is well established that what we eat has an impact on our overall performance and wellbeing. The better we can maintain our health, the more likely we are to think, train and function more effectively. We also reduce our susceptibility to illness and injury.

Food provides us with energy in the form of calories. The more exercise we carry out and the greater its intensity, the more energy we require to recover and fuel sufficiently for our next session or game. It must also be noted that every athlete is different; different size, height, weight, lifestyle, occupation and responsibilities. These too will have an impact on how much energy you require to sustain your training load. Therefore it is important that you start to think like an individual and take note of changes made to your diet that support your needs. Practices that make you feel good and perform to a level that you are happy with.

Inadequate fuelling can impair our performance and health, signs of this include: irritability, sleep disturbances, increased illnesses, menstrual cycle

disturbances, delayed recovery, poor sleep, fatigue, poor cognitive functioning. If you're experiencing any of these, your overall energy intake may need to be improved.

With the above in mind, there is no one diet that we can prescribe specifically to suit every athlete but there are some guidelines we can provide as seen below.

Different macronutrients will play various roles in our recovery and fuelling. It's important to recognise their differences and to know where you can find them:

**Carbohydrates:** These are our main energy source for high intensity exercise, they support our strength and power as well as our immune system. The higher our training load and demand, the more carbohydrates need to be included in our overall diet. Therefore carbohydrate intake can vary with the time of season and our training schedules. Sources include foods like potatoes, rice, oats, fruit, couscous, bread, pasta.

**Did you know** that there is no great difference between white and sweet potatoes so if you prefer one over the other that's not a problem.



**Protein:** It is essential in supporting muscle growth, retention and repair. It will also support our immune system and as it is the most filling out of the macronutrients, including it in our meals makes them a little more satisfying. Protein intake should remain relatively consistent each day looking to including it in your main meals and a snack. Protein is an essential part to recovery so it should always be part of our post-training/ match meal. Sources include poultry, dairy, red meat, eggs and fish. Plant based sources include tofu, Quorn and lentils for example.

**Did you know** red meat is a rich source of iron, a mineral that as females is particularly important for our health.

Vitamin C will aid iron absorption so including foods like citrus fruits, berries, peppers in your diet is important too. You should look to get your iron levels checked regularly to ensure you are meeting your iron needs.

**Fat:** Another energy source, fat provides us with fat soluble vitamins, supports our recovery hormones and our immune system so it plays a pivotal role in our health and performance. Some of the most nutrient dense sources of fat include dairy, oily fish, eggs, avocados, olives, nuts and seeds. A lot of athletes don't realise that fat should make up ~ 25% of their total energy intake. It is easier to opt for foods that are higher in fat on days away from training and

matches as you are not as dependent on carbohydrates those days to perform optimally.

**Did you know** that consuming multiple eggs per day will not have a negative effect on our health? When we consume cholesterol through food (present in the yolk of an egg), our body starts to make less of it. Great news for egg lovers!

Variety is an important aspect of any diet so look to get a mixture of the sources mentioned above.

**Fruit and vegetables** – they cannot be forgotten. They aren't always everyone's favourite however they are very important. They provide us with vitamins, minerals, fibre, water and anti-oxidants supporting our cognitive functioning, digestive health and helping us to avoid illness and injury. Your daily target should be 6 + portions, a portion size equivalent to: 2 small pieces of fruit (e.g. satsumas/ peaches)/ 1 piece of medium sized fruit/ half or 1 slice of a large fruit (e.g. melon/ grapefruit)/ 1 fist of vegetables. Try incorporating homemade smoothies and sauces into your nutritional framework to help contribute to your intake. Experimenting with different cooking methods when it comes to vegetables can also help you to get a flavour for them.

**Did you know** that frozen vegetables and fruits are just as nutritious as the fresh alternatives? Having some in your freezer means you're never stuck for options.

Taking all of the above into account, let's have a look at what you should



aim to consume in your pre-training/ pre-match meals. The choice you go for should be specific to you. When it comes to game day, pre-match meals should be tried and tested around training to ensure it does not have any negative outcomes on your performance. As a rule of thumb, it is best to avoid food that is spicy, creamy and high in fibre before training and matches. Your last meal should be consumed 2-4 hours before training or throw in and should contain carbohydrates, protein, a small amount of fat and vegetables. Examples include:

- Porridge, sliced banana, scoop of whey protein
- Seasoned chicken, spinach and rice
- Tuna mayo, sliced peppers and pasta
- Lean mince Bolognese with baked potato

If you're training and it's an early morning start, look to include a meal that is rich in carbohydrates the night before to help you prepare for your morning session.

With 30-60 minutes to go before training, should you want a snack, go for some that is rich in carbohydrates and easy to digest:

- Cereal/ cereal bars
- Fruit/ dried fruit
- Jellies
- Toast and jam

Post-training/ match meals should look similar to your pre-training/ match options, including both protein and carbohydrates (the amount of the latter will depend on the intensity of the session).

Being able to throw together some easy, quick meals is so important as an athlete. Cooking is a great skill to have and it is certainly something everyone can master. It does not need to be complex, who has time for that! Below are two, one pot recipes that are very easy to throw together.

### **NK curry (5 servings)**

Ingredients:

- 1 x 400g tin chopped tomatoes
- 1 x 400g tin chickpeas
- 1 x 400ml tin of coconut milk
- 1 onion
- 2 large carrots, peeled and chopped
- 2 peppers, de-seeded and chopped
- fresh chilli, garlic, chopped
- mild curry powder

Method:

1. Chop your vegetables; peppers, carrots and onions and open the tins (carrots will need to be peeled before also)

2. Add your vegetables, chickpeas, tinned tomatoes and coconut milk and give your mix a good stir. Add spices and stir again
3. Increase the heat until your mix is bubbling and then reduce the heat so that it simmers
4. Add your chicken and allow the mix to simmer for ~20-25 mins, stirring occasionally

Training? Enjoy this curry with 2 fists of rice or potatoes.

Rest day? Enjoy this meal with 1 fist of rice and a extra portion of vegetables

### **Chilli Con Carne (4 servings)**

Ingredients:

- 500g 5% minced beef
- 1 tin chopped tomatoes
- 1 tin kidney beans
- 1 onion
- 2 large carrots, peeled and chopped
- 2 peppers, de-seeded and chopped
- Fresh chilli, 2 gloves of garlic
- Brown basmati rice



Method:

1. Prepare the mince first: Place pan on hob and add all of the mince. Using the spatula, separate it so that it is not in one big block. There is fat already present in mince so that acts as an 'oil' when cooking so there is no need to add extra. Reduce the heat and stir the mince regularly until it is all completely brown.
2. While the mince is cooking, you need to chop your vegetables; peppers, carrots and onions and open the tins. (Carrots will need to be peeled also before).
3. When the mince is brown, add your vegetables, kidney beans and tinned tomatoes and give your mix a good stir. Add your spices and stir again.
4. Increase the heat until your mix is bubbling and then reduce the heat so that it simmers.

Training? Enjoy this chilli with 2 fists of rice or baked potato. It could also be served with some rice and salad in a wrap as a burrito.

Rest day? Why not have it with some cheese, guacamole, salad and a fistful of rice.

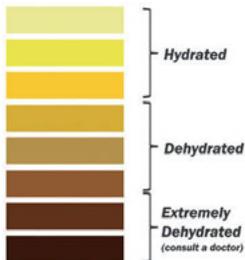


## Hydration

Hydration plays a key role in maintaining optimum health as well as contributing to sporting performance. Being dehydrated by as little as 2% can have negative consequences on our performance. It will affect our concentration, focus and our rate of perceived exertion (i.e. it makes exercise feel harder than it should). From a health perspective, hydration plays an important role in immunity as it supports our saliva production which is our first line of defence against germs. Therefore to make sure you're available to train and play and to get the most out of your performance when you do, staying on top of your hydration is important. **All athletes should arrive to training and matches well hydrated.**

Like other nutrition strategies, **your hydration protocol is very specific to you.** We differ when it comes to the amount we sweat which has an impact on how much fluid we need to consume to replenish the fluid we lose while training and in matches.

This is an important factor to note as rehydration is a really important part of recovery too. Fluid isn't the only thing we lose when we sweat. We also lose electrolytes, sodium being one of the most important ones to consider. It can be added to homemade sports drinks, present in commercial sports drinks or it will be present in oral rehydration solution tablets you can get in most pharmacies to add to your water bottle. This is what makes these drinks more



### Did you know?

- Adding no-added sugar squash/ slices of lemon/ lime or berries to your water can make it tastier and easier to drink
- Tea and coffee will contribute to your overall fluid intake too (espressos are not included though!)
- Soups, smoothies, fruit and vegetables are also contributors to overall fluid intake

rehydrating that water on its own. Bearing this in mind, these sorts of drinks should be considered over the course of games in particular. You should trial different techniques at training so that come game time you have a strategy you know works and that you are comfortable with.

### How can I stay on top of my fluid intake?

Your urine! Below is a urine chart, the colours indicating where your hydration status is at. Aim to get your urine a clear/ straw like colour consistently over the course of the day.

Another way to stay on top of your hydration is to drink to thirst. Carry a water bottle with you and keep sipping on it and refilling it as necessary over the course of the day.

It is important not to consume a large amount of fluid right before bed as that can disrupt your sleep which in turn, can have a negative impact on our performance and recovery.

### Want to work out your sweat losses to ensure you're consuming enough fluid to perform at your best?

Weigh yourself pre and post training. If there is a difference of more than 1-2% of your bodyweight, you are probably not consuming enough fluid.

### Here's how you can make your own sports drink:

- 500ml water, cordial of your choice, pinch of sea salt and 3tbs of sugar – give it a good stir!



## Sleep

Sleep, an element of our routine that is often overlooked. However, what if I told you that by not prioritising this important contributor of performance, you are limiting your potential?

Why is sleep so important? It has an impact on:

- Mood – Inadequate sleep can increase our levels of irritability and confusion
- Appetite regulation – If we don't get enough sleep our appetite increases, long term, this could start to have a negative affect on our body composition (our fat mass and muscle mass)
- Food choice – When we're tired we tend to go for more convenient foods making it more difficult to choose foods that will help our recovery and support our health

- Concentration/ Focus – It is compromised which could be the difference of making a poor tackle/ pass for example
- Immunity – Our immune system isn't as robust with insufficient amounts of sleep making us up to 4.5 times more likely to pick up an infection
- Recovery – Sleep is essential to recovery and our ability to adapt to the training we do
- Energy levels – Energy is greater in those who are well rested
- Injury susceptibility – Athletes who do not acquire sufficient sleep are more likely to pick up an injury

Are we starting to appreciate how important sleep is?

Athletes should aim to get 8-10 hours of sleep per night.



**TIP:** If you are a bit of a distance from this target, try to work your way towards it in 30 minute increments until 8 hours becomes your norm. For example, if you're currently getting 6 hours of sleep per night, look to make 6.5 hours your norm before you aim for 7 and work your way up that way.

While the quantity of our sleep is important so too is the quality. Here are some areas of sleep hygiene that you can look to improve and/ or stay on top of to ensure the quality of your sleep is where it should be.

**TIP:** Set your alarm and turn your phone on to airplane mode 30 minutes before you go to bed. Use this 30 minute window to shower/ get your gear bag organised

for the next day/ hang your washing for example. Essentially, leave some of your chores that you have to do at some point that evening until right before you want to go to sleep to help you keep off electronic devices.

If you feel like there are a few elements above that relate to you, choose one at a time and work your way through. This way you can be sure you're correcting for any area that might compromise the quality of the sleep you're getting and thus support your performance.

It is also worth noting that your menstrual cycle can contribute to sleep disturbances depending on what stage of your cycle you are at. Therefore establishing a pre-bed routine will help you manage this.

Helpful Habits	Areas to improve
Carbohydrates in the last meal before bed can help the quality of your sleep	Caffeine is a stimulant and after 6 hours, half of what we have consumed through teas/ coffees is still in our system which can impair the quality of the sleep we get. Solution? Switch to decaffeinated tea and coffee alternatives or opt for naturally caffeine free drinks after lunchtime i.e. peppermint tea
Regular meal patterns and structure can influence our sleep quality	Eating large meals before bed doesn't agree with everyone so opt for a larger meal earlier in the day with a lighter one closer to bed-time
Keep your room cool and dark	Our phones/ laptops emit a blue light that can disrupt our sleep-wake cycle therefore avoid using your phone/ laptop at least 30 minutes before bedtime
Having a hot shower can help you unwind after a long day	

## Work-Life Balance

■ By Daragh Ó Conchúir

IN THE end, the decision paid off but had it gone the other way, had Galway lost the Liberty Insurance All-Ireland Senior Camogie Final, and the ladies footballers gotten the better of Dublin in their decider, Caitriona Cormican would have accepted that too.

Of course the pill would have been bitter on a personal level, having opted out with the footballers after 13 years of service that began with a losing All-Ireland Final in 2005 but how could you not but be delighted for your many friends who have soldiered long and hard to scale Everest, had they prevailed? There is no evidence of a bad bone in the Cormican body. She would have been thrilled.

The Cappataggle star had never really been given the opportunity to establish herself at Senior level before, although operating on a dual basis nonetheless as a member of the second-string Intermediate squad and winning an All-Ireland with them in 2013.

This was all the more notable given that the woman known by friends as Teeny, was in the midst of studying to be a doctor, a process that is arduous, intense and time-consuming. So she is accustomed to making big decisions, with prioritising, with managing her time.

With her promotion to the Senior Camogie ranks by Cathal Murray last year having just qualified as a doctor and facing into a year in which she would turn 31, Cormican just felt it was time for another big call.



"I felt I just couldn't keep the two going and the job as well. The way sport is gone now you are training as a professional athlete. It is five or six days a week. You are training and you are trying to get your diet right. To be trying to do that for two teams at the highest level, I just didn't feel I could give everything to both.

"I am that bit older as well and a bit prone to injury. The injuries I have been getting over the years are probably overload injuries, tendons and stuff. So I had to pick and I went with my heart."

Cormican ended the season with a huge contribution in the All-Ireland Semi-Final defeat of Cork and then making the switch from attack to defence to mark Anne Dalton, the leading scorer from play in the Championship going into the decider, as a result of an injury to teammate Tara Kenny in training just before the Final.

She was outstanding in helping reduce the considerable threat of the reigning player of the year as Galway defeated Kilkenny. This was the performance of someone in a sound place mentally.

There was no conflict in her mind either about the progress of the footballers. She had expected them to get to the decider. The key to making any important decision is to remove the 'What if?' factor. Remember the situation as it pertained at the time and the reasons for picking the route you did.

"A huge part of patient care is trying to balance everything. Unfortunately the last couple of years you are seeing an

**“ Exercise is hugely important, no matter how busy your job is.**

awful lot of anxiety and depression. Even in younger people; social media has a part to play in that.

"You see as a GP, the importance of wellbeing and having a balanced lifestyle and the importance of exercise and how it can be so good for the body and mind. I would be encouraging patients to get out and exercise to help clear the mind and de-stress.

"In those tough years training as a junior doctor, sport was a release for me but I didn't realise it at the time. It definitely helped me get through those tough jobs. You just enjoy going down to the pitch and meeting the girls. Looking back, sport was a huge part that got me through.

"I made my decision because I could not do it all. I was shouting the girls on against Dublin and they got so close."

There were many challenges for Cormican in recent years but the most severe was undoubtedly when she was on placement in Newport, Co Mayo, the last stop to Achill Island from Westport. She loved the work but the lengthy twice-weekly drive to-and-from training was testing.

"There was often times where I would land late to training. Especially in the winter months, you are finishing later because there is a lot more sick people.

You are landing into training and only doing a half-warm-up. It was tough and I wasn't able to perform to my best.

"You are driving for an hour-and-a-half, or two hours. Sitting in a car, bad roads. Then you are landing into training and you want to be out doing the drills and you rush a warm-up. You are prone to injury. It is about having a bit of experience and understanding you have to do a proper warm-up. If I miss part of the session you have to go with that.

"This year the management were so understanding about the job I had. That plays a huge part especially in our work, you are never going to get out the door when you think you will. Anything can crop up in the evenings. It was so easy, I could ring Cathal and tell him, he was so understanding. Having that is vital.

"It can be stressful but then you have to think back, 'Why am I doing this?' and 'Is it worth it?' I definitely felt it was. I love playing sport and it definitely wasn't something I wanted to give up. I was willing to make those sacrifices and do the driving. I knew it was temporary; eventually I was getting back to Galway and you would be closer for training."

The increasing professionalism in the preparation of teams has helped, including the provision of hot foot after training.

"Two or three years ago, I would have had my food ready for during the day in work and then you don't really want to be eating cold dinner after training. After training, I would pull into a petrol station

and get a banana and a yogurt. It wasn't the right nutrition. I did lose a bit of weight during that period. I was back late then to Mayo and up again early for work in the morning. That definitely wouldn't be sustainable.

"But with the Camogie this year, we got fed after every training. The difference looking back is huge, especially for students, that didn't have to worry about food in the cupboard. It is a tough time in college. It is not cheap, trying to eat right. So that is a huge benefit to the players. I am playing 14 years and it was a first, which is unbelievable really. It was massive for me."

In a schedule that included studying, training and playing, there wasn't much downtime. Now that she is a practising GP, little has changed although being back in Galway means less miles in the car. She doesn't watch television much, apart from *The Sunday Game* ("my favourite programme").

Her boyfriend, Ronan plays for Cappataggle hurlers and the fact they share lifestyle priorities is very helpful.

The two major elements of her life offer balance, the sport a passion that offsets the rigours of work in terms of mind and body but one day of neither is vital.

"I am pretty happy with the balance I have now. With various teams you're going most of the year with maybe some time in December but I find by the time that's over, you are really looking forward to getting back.

“But around Christmas, it’s good when everyone is home and I get more time to catch up with a lot my friends that aren’t into sport and know there is no point texting me during the year about going out! I am really happy with the way I have it now.

“I am very lucky that I have very understanding friends and they have been so used to me since I was 14 or 15 in school. Even one of my best friends, Adrienne, she got married in June but we had a training camp so I missed the wedding mass but I got to the dinner. You hate missing but she is so understanding. She lives in London and she got home for the All-Ireland. Having that support is so important, you don’t feel under pressure.

“It is very important to have the day of the weekend where I can just unwind, relax and chill. I don’t think you would be able to keep going and going and going non-stop between sport and work. You would burn out and you wouldn’t be any good to your teammates and your work colleagues. It is very important to have your time to unwind and de-stress. I can totally clear work and sport from my head when I’m doing that. When I’m doing sport, I’m obsessed by it but when I am outside of it, I am not thinking about it and that’s good.”

It must be difficult however, not to take the tough days from work home or to the pitch, particularly when as a GP, you know many of your patients well and are exposed to so much pain and sadness. But having that other outlet is a godsend.

“I can just recall one specific incident in the summer, I was called out to a very traumatic event. It was something I hadn’t come across before. It was very challenging and upsetting and I said to myself, ‘I don’t think I could go training.’ But then I said, ‘Go training’ and it was the best thing I could have done. I got to see the girls. I didn’t say anything to anyone but it helped my mind getting out on the field. The sport is definitely a great help.”



**“ Young people should know that you can have a career and balance sport.**

Her advice is simple for any young sportsperson – established or aspiring. In truth, it applies to us all and especially those who are sedentary during the day. Given her experiences as a sportsperson playing at Senior inter-county level for what will be 15 years in 2020, doing her Leaving Cert, studying to be a doctor and now working in a busy general practice, it is worth heeding.

“I think it is hugely important to strike a balance in any life you are in, or in any workplace you are in. Definitely exercise is hugely important no matter how busy your job is. You definitely need an outlet. As a GP, I would always promote to my patients to get out and get exercise. It clears your head and puts things in perspective. Some people let work consume them and let it take over their life. I would encourage people not to try do that. Work or study or sport is very important but it is not the be-all and end-all. Your family and being healthy in body and mind is hugely important.

“Young people should know that you can have a career and balance sport. To do that you have to be determined, you have to be organised and you have to plan your day, whether that’s having your food ready. Sleep is very important, having at least eight hours sleep. Even just simple things like having your gear washed and dried and packed the night before.



“I know young people who are doing Leaving Cert and exams and that is a huge part of your life. Especially your Leaving Cert, you hear about that in National School so you feel everything has to go into that. I found having the sport made me more organised and better at studying. If I had to go training, I only had a window of two hours that I had to get something done. If I didn’t have sport I would be sitting there for the evening and it might take me four or five hours to get that done. I would definitely say to young people to keep up your sport throughout the exams. And it’s so good for the mind.

“You are trying to get people to realise you have to look after yourself. In the last few years I have realised if you don’t look after yourself you won’t be able to look after anyone else.”

# SECTION 3: Health and Wellbeing



## Developing Emotional Wellbeing

■ by Timmy Hammersley

Emotional wellbeing is defined by the Mental Health Foundation as a “*positive sense of wellbeing which enables an individual to be able to function in society and meet the demands of everyday life, people in good mental health have the ability to recover effectively from illness, change or misfortune*”. I differentiate between wellbeing and emotional wellbeing because wellbeing can often be alluded to in over simplistic terms with reference to such aspects as diet, exercise and sleep. While these are and will always be important everyday variables, true well being involves something deeper and is best referred to as emotional wellbeing.

Humans are by our nature emotional creatures and, because of this, emotional wellbeing is not the absence of emotions but the ability to both understand and utilise them going forward in life. The more we can master these emotions the more we will be able to get out of life and be the person we were always meant to be. This though is not a process which

can take place overnight, but a journey in which people need to choose to go on. By the same token, emotional wellbeing is never a destination but a course of action where any positive focus on the emotional self by an individual will lead to levels of self-development. Further to this, our focus never needs to be on complex ideas but instead based on knowing who we really are and what we want to be. However, they are profound and can lead to life changing levels of wellbeing. There are many routes individuals can take in developing their wellbeing. From my experience though, this is best served by focusing on a number of key areas which include values, vulnerability and maintaining a Stoic mindset.

### Values

Values are the aspects which we believe are important in how we should live our life. When we know them we have a clearer picture of what is both important and unimportant for us. They can be the guidance in how we make decisions, what we spend our time doing and in generally determining our priorities. Values are related to our emotional wellbeing in that often in periods where things feel wrong or out of sync we might not be living up

## Steps to Identifying my Values



to what we deem important, or if life generally feels unhappy for us, we might not be aware of what is important to us. It is because of this that spending time identifying our values can have a hugely positive effect. People often ask, 'How do I identify my values?'

After this, one's values should become clearer and I always like the idea of narrowing them down to single words. Once this process has concluded our next aim should be to align these values with as much of our activities and involvements as possible. However, people should not feel undue pressure to have values fully connected with all of their responsibilities and participations, as the realities of life will mean this

potential will vary among individuals. We should just aim to make this happen in as many remits as possible and ensure development over time. The last step is to both reassert and analyse the commitment we give to our values. The most constructive way I find of doing this is through consistent journaling where we take note and evaluate our performance towards what we have committed to. Journaling is an invaluable exercise and keeps us honest with ourselves. Ascertaining our values can be a difficult process but in the long run it can provide great comfort. We have a much better chance of living a life inspired and in times of challenge we will have guidance which we can always fall back on.

## Vulnerability

👏 **Vulnerability is an act of courage because you merge with your authentic self, instead of hiding behind a facade to appease others.** 🙏  
(Haruki Murakami).

So much of modern life can be about perfection and conformity; perfection even though it is not attainable for any of us, and conformity, even though the most natural thing for us as children was to grow up with clarity on the dreams of who want to be and the unique impact we want to have. The opposite of these are truth and imperfection, the bravery to both find and act out our true selves along with being unafraid of imperfection. True vulnerability is related to imperfection as it is much easier to showcase our strengths than expose our weaknesses. If we continue to hide and be ashamed of our weaknesses they are nearly sure to keep coming back and expose themselves. As the quote states, *“what you resist persists, what you fight for you get more of, and what you embrace, dissolves”*, and this is in essence the approach which has the most potential. When we can find it within us to embrace and even appreciate our weaknesses and imperfections they can become something which brings us forward.

Nowadays much of this image of perfection is put out there over social media and the real consequence of this is less time acting out who we really are. The major obvious weakness of this author’s life has been his stammer. For years it was not so much the fear of stuttering but the fear of being exposed as someone who stammers. Numerous times it held

me back from speaking and when I did speak it was this fear which caused me to stammer more. However, the turning point was first an acceptance of my stammer, that it was a part of me and maybe always will be, and second an appreciation that it might actually be a source of strength. Most of my professional life involves public speaking of some context and looking back to a number of years ago I would not have had the confidence to do such. I still have a stammer but understand that even though I may not be speaking with 100% fluency, I can still speak and at the same time positively impact people while doing it. An individual’s challenges may vary in their intensity, but everyone has their own *“stammer”*.

Furthermore, you will have often heard it said how it’s *“good to talk”*. This is true, but what carries even more weight is that *“it’s good to be vulnerable”*. This is because it takes vulnerability to speak about your deepest challenges. It takes vulnerability to go to that place but it is only in that space where things become clearer. True vulnerability is strength and this doesn’t mean not aiming for self-improvement but approaching it with an approach of acceptance. Acceptance of ourselves as unique individuals who deserve and have the capacity to develop a positive internal relationship.

## Stoic Mindset

Stoicism is a school of philosophy which hails from Ancient Greece, 3rd century BC. One of its first practitioners was the Roman Emperor, Marcus Aurelius but it is as relevant now as ever. Unlike other philosophies it is more based on action



rather than complex theories or debates and offers us an approach which we can utilize on a daily basis. Developing a Stoic mindset can contribute to the sustainability of our emotional wellbeing as it teaches a calmness under pressure and the avoidance of emotional extremeness. Stoicism is made up of numerous elements but four of the more significant ones include learning to differentiate between what we can and can't change, taking a view of ourselves from above, appreciating how short our life actually is, and practising negative visualisation.

Understanding and acting upon what we can and can't control is one of the fundamental cornerstones of Stoicism.

Regularly people are often too consumed by factors which are completely outside of their control and this can lead to a sense of hopelessness. In avoiding this we need to become clear on what is within our control and structure our thoughts and actions accordingly. Taking a view from above means looking at our life in the context of both the wider society we live in and the world in general. By engaging in this it will help put some of our own challenges into greater perspective. We also sometimes live with an attitude that the length of time we have is infinite and we will live forever. However, we need to appreciate and understand how short and fragile it actually is. This can act as a motivating factor to use our time and every day as well as we can.

Negative visualisation might seem like an odd practice but it is the one which helps prepare us most for the inevitability of life's setbacks. We often expect things to go as well as we hope but by reviewing and rehearsing for negative possibilities or pitfalls we are much better able to handle them when they do occur. In essence this prepares us for both the successes and failures which are sure to occur. Along with the above, what Stoicism teaches as the most important in any situation is not what happens to an individual but what their response is. This is the approach which brings it all together and helps us to make the best out of any scenario which we are in.

An emphasis on values, vulnerability and a Stoic mindset might not always be the buzz words which are associated with wellbeing, but as was stated at the beginning, development in these areas offers an opportunity to look deeper into oneself and delve further into emotional wellbeing. All of the above focus areas are also highly interlinked and it is worth noting that growth in one can also lead to growth in another. Exercises such as journaling are relevant to all three and allows us to bring them into focus on a daily basis.

The value of the three approaches is that, even though they are lifelong, they are also daily practices and at the same time offer individuals an important source of focus. It's this focus which can help us navigate times of challenge and chaos.



## Mental Health First Aid

■ by MHFA Ireland

### Triggers & signs of mental health problems

We all have mental health just as we have physical health, but it can seem more difficult to spot the signs of mental health problems. Here are some of the common triggers which might impact on someone's mental health and signs that suggest they may need support.

#### TRIGGERS

People often undergo significant life changes without developing a mental health issue. But for some people changes in their work or personal life, including happy events, can prove stressful and may trigger mental health problems.

### Here are some examples of circumstances which might trigger mental health problems:

#### Personal life changes

- Bereavement
- Relationship breakdown
- Having children
- Health scares or physical illness

#### Changes at work

- Starting a new job
- Coping with an increased workload or a promotion
- Poor relationships with colleagues or managers
- Redundancy, or fear of redundancy

#### SIGNS TO SPOT

Recognising a mental health issue is the first step in getting the support needed to recover. One of the first signs of mental health problems may be changes in the person's behaviour.

### Some of the signs to look out for:

#### Physical

- Frequent headaches or stomach upsets
- Suffering from frequent minor illnesses
- Difficulty sleeping or constant tiredness
- Being run down
- Lack of care over appearance
- Sudden weight loss or gain

#### Emotional & Behavioural

- Irritability, aggression or tearfulness
- Being withdrawn, not participating in conversations or social activities



- Increased arguments or conflict with others
- Increased consumption of caffeine, alcohol, cigarettes or sedatives
- Indecision, inability to concentrate
- Erratic or socially unacceptable behavior
- Increased arguments or conflict with others
- Being louder or more exuberant than usual
- Loss of confidence
- Difficulty remembering things

### At work

- Increased errors, missing deadlines or forgetting tasks
- Taking on too much work and volunteering for every new project
- An employee who is normally punctual arriving late
- Working too many hours: first in, last out, sending emails out of hours or while on leave
- Increased sickness absence
- Being fixated with fair treatment and quick to use grievance procedures



To find out more about how employers can support mental wellbeing and supportive behaviours, visit [www.mhfaireland.ie](http://www.mhfaireland.ie)

## Be Body Positive

### What is Body Image?

Body image is a way of describing how a person feels about their own body and appearance. It describes how you see yourself, how you think and feel about the way you look and how you think others see you.

When you have a **positive** body image you can see your body's natural size and shape and are comfortable with it. Having a positive body image also means knowing that body image is only one part of who you are. It means knowing that your appearance is not linked to other values like intelligence, popularity or success.

If you have a **negative** body image you may feel unhappy with the way you look. Sometimes this means people may not be able to see their body as it really is. Feeling negative about your appearance can also make you feel bad about yourself and can cause low self esteem.



### What/who influences Body Image?

Your body image can be influenced by those around you like family members and friends. Media messages from TV, magazines and billboards can also have a significant impact on how you feel about yourself.

These images of so-called 'perfect' looking people are everywhere. You've probably noticed that they don't look the same as the people you see in everyday life. In real life, people come in all shapes and sizes but in the media they seem to be all the same size. Seeing these 'ideal' images everywhere can damage self esteem and body image by making you feel like you have to live up to these unrealistic ideals.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

- The images in magazines **are not real**. They have been airbrushed which means all imperfections have been removed. The shape and size of the models has also been altered.
- Twenty years ago, models weighed 8% less than the average woman. Today, **they weigh 23% less**.
- Male models today are also a **different shape and weight** to the average man

## WAYS TO FEEL BETTER ABOUT YOURSELF:



You could stop reading magazines, or if you do read them, be aware that the **images** in them **are not real**.



**Stop comparing yourself to others.** Make a list of all the good and special things about you without mentioning your appearance. Remind yourself of these when you're feeling low.



Focus on your **positive qualities** and talents. If someone pays you a compliment, make a note of it.



Hang out with people that make you feel good. Try and stay away from people who put you down or make fun of you.



Spend time on **activities you enjoy** and that make you feel good about yourself.



**Remember that body image is only one part of who you are.** It is not a reflection of the type of person you are or what people really see in you. If you think about your friends, you think about how they make you feel and what you have in common, not what they look like. Try and think about yourself in the same way – focussing on qualities other than your appearance

### What are eating disorders?

An eating disorder like anorexia, bulimia or binge eating disorder is a serious mental health condition that can have a lasting impact on your health.

### Is there a link between eating disorders and body image?

People with low self-esteem or a negative body image do tend to be more likely to develop an eating disorder, however there is no single reason why a person develops an eating disorder.

It is usually a combination of factors. It may be that someone has a difficult situation or problem that they are finding difficult to deal with, but sometimes it is not obvious what the trigger is.

**Eating disorders are not about food.** An eating disorder develops as a way for the person to cope with or avoid difficult feelings. **People do not choose to have an eating disorder and it is NOT a way of attention seeking.**

An eating disorder can make the person feel **very alone and out of control**. It can make someone difficult to talk to or spend time with, and it can make it difficult for them to let anyone know what's happening.

### Recovery from an eating disorder

The first thing to remember is that recovery is possible. Many people fully recover from eating disorders and go on to live healthy and happy lives. The first step towards recovery is to talk to someone you feel you can trust.

### What can you do if a friend has an eating disorder?

- Find out more about eating disorders and services so you can understand more and be ready to help.
- Talk to them and let them know you're concerned and why.
- Don't be surprised if they deny a problem.
- Encourage them to talk to an adult they trust.
- If they won't tell someone, even if it seems like a bad thing to do, it would be a good idea if you could. Although your friend may be angry with you at first, it may be the first step towards getting them the help they need.
- Don't change your own eating habits.
- Let them know you're there for them.

## Support Services

Bodywhys (Republic of Ireland)	Eating Disorders Association (N.I.)
<a href="http://www.bodywhys.ie">www.bodywhys.ie</a>	24 Hour Helpline Support 028 90 235959
Support Groups	Face to Face and Online Support Groups: Groups for people with eating disorders, Carers Group
BodywhysConnect 19+	Drop-in Service
YouthConnect 13-18	1-1 Support Early Intervention/ Prevention Programmes for Schools and Youth Groups
Email Support Service	Email Support Service
Free PiLaR Programme for Families	Workshops for Professionals



## Alcohol and Sports Performance

■ adopted from GAA Community Health

### Playing, celebrating and drinking

The social side of Gaelic Games is very important and celebrating with team members after a match is a tradition in some clubs. However, if your celebrations involve drinking alcohol and especially if you drink to the point where you get drunk, this can seriously affect your fitness. If you take your sport seriously and like to do the best you can for yourself and your team, it's worth knowing the facts and what you can do to reduce your risk of poor performance.

### Effects of alcohol on your performance

Risk	Description
Greater risk of muscle cramps:	During exercise, your muscles burn sugar thereby producing lactic acid. Too much lactic acid leads to muscle fatigue and cramps. If you drink in the 24-hour period before a match the alcohol contributes to a bigger build-up of lactic acid and dramatically increases your risk of cramping.
Greater risk for injuries and associated complications:	Alcohol increases the bleeding and swelling around soft tissue injuries (sprains, bruises, and cuts- the most common sports injuries) requiring a longer recovery period. Alcohol also masks pain, which may lead you to delay in getting treatment - rapid treatment can make all the difference in a speedy recovery. If you've been injured, avoid alcohol, as it will complicate your recovery.
Greater body heat loss:	Alcohol is a vasodilator (it causes the blood vessels near the surface of the skin to expand) and thereby promotes heat loss and a lowered body temperature.
Reduced endurance:	The blood sugar your body needs for energy is produced by the liver when it releases glucose into the blood stream. Drinking alcohol in the 48-hour period before a match reduces your body's ability to produce this sugar, so you have less energy and less endurance capacity.
Slower reactions:	Alcohol is a sedative and it can affect your performance during a game for up to 72 hours after you have finished drinking. Some players think they have less tension and increased relaxation as a result of alcohol. The actual result, however, is poorer hand-eye coordination and slower responses.

Dehydration:	Alcohol promotes water loss. It reduces the production of the anti-diuretic hormone, causing you to urinate more. This, in turn leads to dehydration.
Vitamin and Mineral Depletion:	Water loss caused by alcohol consumption involves the additional loss of important minerals such as magnesium, potassium, calcium, and zinc. These are vital to the maintenance of fluid balance and nerve and muscle action and coordination.
Reduced aerobic performance:	Alcohol reduces the body's ability to convert food to energy and reduces carbohydrate/blood sugar levels. These effects, together with lactic acid build-up and dehydration, combine to reduce aerobic performance.
Muscle injury:	The usual treatment for injury (rest, ice, compression, elevation) can be negated due to the painkilling effect of alcohol. If you can't feel the pain of your injury you are less likely to take care of it and slow your recovery time or even cause further damage.

So, no matter how much training and conditioning you've put in, drinking up to 72 hours before a match will take the edge off your fitness. If you want to be the very best you be at your sport you'll have more of a chance of achieving that by not drinking alcohol. However if you do want to drink it's best to drink a little and not too often.

For more information visit [www.gaa.ie/asap](http://www.gaa.ie/asap)

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## Author Biographies

### Dr Siobhán O'Connor

Dr Siobhán O'Connor primarily researches in the field of injury surveillance and injury prevention, with a particular interest in female sports, Gaelic games, and horse racing. She has previously published research on Camogie including examining injuries in club and country Camogie players, Camogie players and coaches barriers and facilitators to injury prevention programmes and the effectiveness of injury prevention workshops in Camogie coaches. She is a Certified Athletic Therapist and has a MSc examining training load in Gaelic footballers and a PhD in injury surveillance and risk factors for injury in adolescent and collegiate Gaelic games. She is currently an Assistant Professor in the School of Health and Human Performance in Dublin City University and Vice President of the World Federation of Athletic Therapy and Training.



### Ristead Byrne

Ristead is a Chartered Physiotherapist who completed degrees in both Health and Performance Science and Physiotherapy from University College Dublin in 2011 and 2014 respectively. He currently works as a physiotherapist in the Sports Surgery Clinic in Dublin. Whilst working there for last 5 years he has developed a special interest in the rehabilitation of traumatic and degenerative shoulder injuries, athletic groin injuries, neck pain and concussion. He is also a Strength and Conditioning Coach with an accreditation from the UKSCA. He has a keen interest in sports performance and has had first-hand experience competing at the highest level, as a rugby player for the Irish U18s, U19s and U20s.



He has experience working as a physiotherapist with Schools and Club Rugby, Club GAA and Ireland's Fittest Family. He is currently the Physiotherapist with the Cavan Men's Senior GAA team.

### Kate McDaid, Health and Performance Nutritionist and founder of NutriKate.

Kate completed an MSc in Sport and Exercise Nutrition at Loughborough University before setting up her high-performance nutrition consultancy in Dublin called NutriKate in 2017. Here, Kate and her team work with the Dublin Senior Ladies and Longford Senior Men's football teams, an array of athletes and individuals looking to improve their health and performance and they deliver seminars around the country to clubs and corporate entities. Kate is also a lecturer at Technological University Dublin where she has created and delivers, an Applied Nutrition module to 4th year students.



### Timmy Hammersley

Timmy works in the Non-Profit sector with SpunOut.ie. SpunOut.ie is Ireland's youth information website which is by young people and for young people. Timmy's main role is to facilitate the voices of young people and ensure the organisation constantly lives up to its mission as a youth led charity. Additionally Timmy works individually as an Athletic Performance Coach with both teams and individual athletes. Within this he brings a wellbeing approach which combines both his work in the non-profit sector and sporting environments. His work has also recently branched out into the workplace and corporate environments where he places an emphasis on group dynamics and team building.



# Check out the Camogie Association sections on the GAA Learning portal



## ▼ [www.learning.gaa.ie/camogieplayer](http://www.learning.gaa.ie/camogieplayer)

The screenshot shows the GAA Learning portal interface. At the top, there are navigation links for 'GAA Courses', 'Planner', and 'ePortfolio', along with social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Below the navigation, there are buttons for 'GAA.ie', 'Camogie', and 'LGFA'. The main header reads 'Camogie Players'. A large image shows two players in action. Below the image, a welcome message states: 'Welcome to the "Camogie Players" section of the Learning and Development Portal. Click on the sections below to access resources on injury prevention, concussion, helmet safety, anti-doping, health and wellbeing and more.' A sub-header says 'Click on the tiles below.' Three tiles are displayed: 'Camogie Anti-doping', 'Camogie Concussion Guidelines', and 'Camogie Injury Prevention Programmes'.

## [www.learning.gaa.ie/camogiecoaching](http://www.learning.gaa.ie/camogiecoaching) ▼

The screenshot shows the GAA Learning portal interface for the 'Camogie Coaching' section. It features the same navigation and social media elements as the previous page. The main header reads 'Camogie Coaching'. A large image shows a player in a yellow jersey in action. Below the image, a welcome message states: 'Welcome to the "Camogie Coaching" section of the Learning and Development Portal. Click on the sections below to access resources to assist with your Coach Learning and Development.' A sub-header says 'Click on the tiles below.' Three tiles are displayed: 'Camogie Coach Education Courses', 'Camogie Coaching Articles', and 'Camogie Coaching Resources'.