

## Keeping Girls in Sport

There used to be a saying that girls were “sugar and spice and everything nice”. While that is a sweet idea, it doesn’t acknowledge that girls are also fierce, tough, brave, and competitive or that girls and women can be dedicated, extraordinary athletes. The proof is found in every province from playgrounds to podiums.

**In 2016, Canada sent 316 athletes to the Summer Olympics. 59% of those athletes were women and those women brought home 87% of the medals.**

Those statistics are exciting. Women and girls are playing and succeeding. That should lead us to believe that more Canadian girls are playing and staying in sport. Unfortunately, they’re not. By the time a young person turns thirteen, 70% will quit sport, and for every boy that leaves, six girls walk away from sport and activity.

In partnership with Canadian Tire Jumpstart, the Coaching Association of Canada, and the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport, we have created Keeping Girls in Sport. This 90-minute interactive online course worth 2 PD points toward NCCP certification helps coaches, mentors, and leaders understand what girls need to feel and be successful and stay active.

### Over four engaging modules, we look at:

- Understanding ourselves as coaches and how what we value and believe impacts the girls we lead.
- The history of women in sport and some of the challenges for equality and acceptance female athletes continue to face.
- The unique difference between coaching boys and girls, including how the sport culture we create as coaches affects a girl’s willingness to participate and their self-esteem.
- The enormous pressure girls are under from media and sport culture to look a certain way or be a particular shape or size, and how deeply this kind of pressure affects body image, self-esteem, and belief in their abilities.
- The three major kinds of injuries girls sustain that cause them to quit sport:
  - **Mechanical Injuries:** which are injuries to the muscles, ligaments, and bones and include non-impact injuries to their ACL and concussion. We’ll focus on strategies for preventing Mechanical Injuries through proper stretching and training techniques that can help prevent up to 80% of non-impact ACL injuries. As well as understanding that helmets do not prevent concussions. Concussion prevention starts with respect for the rules of the game and the opponent.
  - **Energetic Injuries:** which are caused by girls not eating enough to fuel the demands from training and competition. We’ll focus on strategies for preventing Energetic Injuries including talking to girls about proper nutrition and, though occasionally uncomfortable, menstruation. As well as being aware of the Female Athlete Triad: girls stop eating the calories they need to fuel their active bodies which causes menstruation to stop. When menstruation stops, estrogen levels decrease creating a much higher likelihood of stress fracture. This often affects a girl’s involvement in sport, sometimes for life.
  - **Relationship Injuries:** which are a result of an athlete not feeling valued or accepted which causes “I’m not good enough” or “I don’t belong.” We’ll focus on strategies for preventing Relationship Injuries including the three key themes that help create a healthy culture, encourage engagement and participation—social connection and acceptance, skill acquisition, and positive role models.

Keeping Girls in Sport was created to help everyone who coaches girls understand how girls develop physically, mentally, socially, and emotionally, so we can help every young athlete stay in sport, reach their potential, remain active long after the competitions end, and become the next generation of inspiring female coaches and role models.