



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Addicted to Exercise: Are YOU Really in Control? Presentation about compulsive exercise, athletes and eating disorders**

**Vancouver, B.C.** – Dr. Ron Manley, Clinical Director of the eating disorders program at BC Children's Hospital, will speak about the causes, signs, and dangerous consequences of disordered eating and compulsive exercise during a free presentation on Feb. 7, noon to 1 p.m. at the YWCA, 535 Hornby St. Vancouver.

This presentation is being held in conjunction with Disordered Eating Awareness Week, Feb. 7 to Feb. 13, which occurs each year to raise awareness about disordered eating.

“An obsession with exercise is a frequent component of disordered eating. Athletes or fitness participants struggling with disordered eating start a diet like anyone else, but they are driven to excessive weight loss,” says Dr. Manley. “Their fitness program becomes frenzied, compulsive exercise that they maintain regardless of injury or the impact on their health.”

People who are obsessed with exercise are often referred to as “obligatory” or “compulsive” exercisers. They must have an exercise fix before they allow themselves to eat anything, or they feel that they must burn off any calories they consume. They will not stop, even if they are exhausted or injured.

“Professionals involved in the teaching, coaching, training and support of sports, dancing, and other physical activities need to be particularly aware of the risk factors. These professionals can play a crucial role in the prevention of disordered eating,” says Dr. Manley.

Over the past few decades there has been an explosion in the number of female athletes, which typically has excellent benefits for both physical and social health.

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For a small number of females, however, the drive to excel can also lead to behaviors with negative long-term consequences. Sports medicine practitioners and researchers are concerned about a phenomenon termed the Female Athlete Triad, which includes: disordered eating, amenorrhea (loss of menstruation), and premature osteoporosis. Other effects include fatigue, loss of muscle, inability to concentrate, increased risk of cardiovascular disease, and risk of infertility due to low estrogen levels and poor nutrition habits.

Males may also be at risk of developing disordered eating and/or muscle dysmorphia, characterized by obsessive dissatisfaction with body image, and feeling that they are weak and their muscles are not big enough, even though they may actually have large, strong muscles.

Those participating in sports which focus on body size and shape, such as dance, figure skating, gymnastics, distance running, body building and wrestling, may be at increased risk.

To view Health Canada's Active Living Guides for children, adults, and seniors, visit: [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/lifestyles/physical\\_activity.html](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/lifestyles/physical_activity.html). To learn more about the Feb. 7 presentation, or about disordered eating and compulsive exercise, contact the Eating Disorder Resource Centre of B.C. at (604) 875-2084 or [edrcbc@direct.ca](mailto:edrcbc@direct.ca).

*BC Children's Hospital, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority, provides expert care for the province's most seriously ill or injured children, including newborns and adolescents. For more information please visit [www.cw.bc.ca](http://www.cw.bc.ca).*

*The Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) plans, manages and evaluates selected specialty and province-wide health care services across BC, working with the five geographic health authorities to deliver province-wide solutions that improve the health of British Columbians. For more information please visit [www.phsa.ca](http://www.phsa.ca).*

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