



CARRIDE CONVERSATIONS

TRUST YOUR GUT

Has your athlete ever said "I feel sick to my stomach" when they are stressed? Or "I have butterflies in my stomach" when they are excited or feeling nervous? That is because your gut and brain are directly connected and are in constant communication with each other.

While the gut and brain are two separate units, they operate together to achieve balance in the body. When the body becomes imbalanced, it affects overall performance, and the brain-gut axis is working hard to achieve balance again.

The gut, also known as the second brain, serves a major role in not only aiding in digestion but also managing emotions and stress. So "**trusting your gut**" means paying attention to the feeling your gut is trying to tell you. Something is off, something is imbalanced. The beauty is that you can help your athlete adopt healthy habits and build them into their daily routines to manage stress and adversity.

THE PROCESS

Did you know...The brain influences gut function when high levels of cortisol are secreted (from the gut) through the vagus nerve AND the gut can also send signals to the brain affecting mood and cognitive functions.

The vagus nerve is the message center between the brain and gut. The vagus nerve is part of the parasympathetic nervous system, and when it's activated, it increases what is called "vagal tone" slowing your heart rate, and calming our nervous system. When we experience stress our vagus nerve turns on.

About 90% of the body's serotonin, also known as a key happy hormone that helps regulate mood, is produced in the gut. When there is a lack of serotonin, it can lead to feelings of depression, anxiety and mental fatigue.

TOOLS AND TIPS

...for the car ride home

How to support your athlete develop a healthy gut to manage stress and achieve high performance:

- **Practice deep breathing:** deep breathing helps to activate the parasympathetic nervous system, aka our relax response. *(see video)*
- **Find recovery movement:** while your athlete is probably practicing a sport every day, find recovery movement to help release feel good hormones (released from our gut) and also open up the vagus nerve to relax the body *(Stretching, yoga, mobility, walk in nature)*
- **Eat a balanced diet:** you eat to nourish your cells to nourish not only your physical health, but your mental health. Food is fuel! Adopt a diet for pre and post performance that is rich in fiber, fruits, veggies and omega-3s and balances in protein and complex carbs, to support elite mental functioning.

Save the date: 17 November
Winter Sports Begin

4 March
Spring Sports Begin

12 August
Fall 2024 Sports Begin