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Nutrition in URI Athletes vs. Non-Athletes

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AMITY TOBIAS (Biological Sciences)

Nutrition in URI Athletes vs. Non-Athletes

Sponsor: Michael Franco (URI Athletics)

Being a student athlete and growing up in sports has had both positive and negative effects on my life. Children often take part in sports at a young age to teach them important life skills such as dedication, hard work, and discipline. While sports are very effective for physical fitness and being a part of a team may be crucial in a kid's life, there may also be some negative effects. Some sports such as gymnastics, hockey, soccer, etc., have an intensely high demand, both physically and mentally. Athletes are stereotyped to be the fittest, healthiest group of people and have expectations depending on their sport as to how they should look, what they should eat, how often they should workout, etc. These high demands may lead to negative effects such as body image and mental health issues. I conducted a ten question, anonymous survey where I collected responses from 103 University of Rhode Island students. Of these 103 participants, roughly one-half of respondents identified as collegiate athletes. Through this research, I concluded that 87.4% of these participants have struggled with body image issues or felt pressured to lose weight; 62.4% rated their level of concern about their body shape as a 6 or above; 60.2% said they exercise with the sole purpose of losing weight, and 56% said that they don't eat enough food each day or are not sure. Clearly, these are concerning statistics as sports should not lead to this sort of mentality and can lead to depression and other mental health issues. As a result of my findings, I will strive to bring about greater awareness of body image and sports.