

# Supporting Athletes Through Illness

When athletes are involved in high-performance Basketball illness can feel like a major interruption — not just to their training, but to their wellbeing, confidence, and goals. As a parent or guardian, your response during these moments is important.

Here are four top tips to help you support your young person when they're unwell.

1

## Prioritise Health Over Performance

Athletes are often driven, disciplined and deeply invested in their progress — which can make illness feel like a threat to everything they're working towards. Rest and recovery is part of the sporting journey. It is not time lost, but time wisely invested. Reassure your young person that taking time to heal is a normal and essential part of being an athlete. Avoid performance-focused language like “You’ll fall behind” or “You need to catch up,” and instead say, “Your body needs this rest — and then you will bounce back.”

2

## Stay Calm, Grounded, and Supportive

Your reaction will often guide theirs. If you appear worried or frustrated, they may pick up on those emotions, increasing their own worry. Try to model calmness and care. Acknowledge their feelings — “I know it’s hard to miss training” — while reinforcing that this is a temporary phase. Avoid rushing to fix everything; instead, offer steady support and help your young person focus on what they can control, like sleep, nutrition, and a positive mind.

3

## Know When Illness Is More Likely to Strike

There are typical circumstances when athletes are at greater risk of getting sick:

- **Heavy training blocks** or sudden spikes in intensity
- **Competition periods** with travel, stress, and disrupted routines
- **School stress**, especially around exams
- **Post-event fatigue**, when the immune system is vulnerable

By recognising these high-risk windows, you can proactively support your child’s health & wellbeing.

## Prevention is Key

Simple habits can significantly reduce the risk of illness. Help athletes build strong routines around these six key areas:

- **Wash Well** – Encourage thorough handwashing, especially after training, gym sessions, or public transport.
- **Rest Well** – Athletes getting less than 8 hours of sleep per night are at increased risk of illness and injury. Help them prioritise consistent, quality sleep.
- **Eat Well** – Fuel with nutrient-rich foods that support immunity and recovery and seek a qualified sports dietician for a customised plan.
- **Hydrate Well** – Dehydration can be detrimental to health and performance. Encourage regular fluid intake.

Illness is part of every athlete’s journey. With a little prevention and good rest, athletes recover well — and in the long run, return stronger in body, mind, and spirit.