



What's Next for Canadian Athletes?



On March 22, 2020 Canada was the first Nation to announce that it will not send its athletes to Tokyo in 2020 due to the risks related to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Although this decision was welcomed by most as definitive support by Canadian sport leaders for the health of its athletes, the collective disappointment of athletes who represent our flag was felt across the Nation.

It is difficult to predict exactly what will happen next (from an Olympics point of view- those decisions will be made in the coming weeks). We hope that the other member nations that comprise the Olympic community will step up and join our voices in calling for postponement of the Games to 2021.

We can anticipate that the spectrum of emotions our athletes will experience will include relief, disappointment, sadness, anger, confusion, and uncertainty. These will come in waves and in stages; and not everyone will follow the same path.

There are several pathways that people may follow over the next few weeks.



One path follows forward-thinking: continuing to train and maintain goals, while utilizing supports and trusting that your opportunity will still come.

Another path follows uncertainty, with swirling insecurity about a future that has a vague outline of school, housing, family and finances.

Yet others follow declining trails of desolation, negativity, sadness, frustration, and feeling of loss.

The most important things you can do right now are to do whatever it takes to keep moving *forward*:

- Maintain your nutrition
- Find time to exercise- it may not be your typical training, but *movement is medicine*
- Try to get enough sleep
- STAY CONNECTED. You are not alone in this and there are thousands of teammates feeling the same things you are.
- Maintain *self care*- do things that make you feel good, stay in contact with people who make you feel good
- Look to the future- the unknowns will start to take shape; and
- Control what you can control
- Support each other

Remember your supports:

- 1. Know where to go.** The type of struggles you are having may dictate what level of support you need.
 - a.** If you are worried about how these interruptions will affect your maintenance of fitness and mental strategies for performance and anxiety, then **Mental Performance Consultants** can support that.
 - b. Psychologists and counsellors** can assist in the delivery of psychotherapy to discuss mood changes, anxiety and sleep strategies (as well as other things).
 - c.** For more severe symptoms such as severe anxiety, or low (or high) mood that lasts for a week or more and interferes with function and self-care, a **Sports Psychiatrist** would be the best service to access. If anxiety, disordered eating, mood or OCD symptoms (obsessions and compulsions) are more difficult to manage, or if insomnia or panic attacks are become more regular, a Sports Psychiatrist should be involved in your care. If hopelessness, self-harm and suicidal thoughts are occurring, referral to a sports psychiatrist is a must.
 - d.** One of the biggest differences between the types of providers include the fact that Psychiatrists are medical doctors who can make

- diagnoses, order medical tests (if necessary), provide prescriptions (if necessary), and their fees are covered by provincial health insurance.
- e. All of these providers can work together to provide comprehensive and complementary care for the athlete. Many National Sport organizations have access to Sports Psychiatry services that can be delivered across the country. For those who do not have a formal relationship with a Sports Psychiatrist, support can be easily accessed.

Available resources:

Specialized mental health support is available. Contact your regional Game Plan advisor (<https://www.mygameplan.ca/>), Director, Health and Performance Services at your COPSIN centre or institute, Sport Psychiatry Services (www.synergysportmentalhealth.ca) or CCHMS (<https://www.ccmhs-ccsms.ca/>) for assistance with a mental health referral.

1. **Game Plan- @gameplandematch- Morneau-Shepell Support line 1-844-240-2990; <https://mygameplan.ca/resources/health>**
2. **Director, Health and Performance Services at your COPSIN Center or Institute**
3. **Sport Psychiatry- Central contact for services across the country, direct athlete care: Dr. Carla Edwards- cedwards@synergysportmentalhealth.ca
www.synergysportmentalhealth.ca**
4. **Assistance for general service referral - CCMHS- (<https://www.ccmhs-ccsms.ca/>)**

Canadians are STRONG and RESILIENT.

#37millionstrong

Postpone today, conquer tomorrow

Dr. Carla Edwards, MD