

# The Smartphone Effect

Dr. Alison Yeung

Blueprint  
NUTRITION

**A letter promoting smartphone-free spaces during team sports and activities**



# A quick introduction

**Who we are and what we are passionate about!**

## **Dr. Alison Yeung, MD, CCFP, Family Physician**

I am a practicing Family Physician with over a decade of experience working with adolescents and their families. I began speaking out about the impact smartphones and social media are having on adolescent mental health after seeing the undeniable impact in my practice. These technologies have slowly crept into all of our lives, but it is clear that we are already seeing impacts on the developing minds of children globally. My goal is to reach parents, educators, and other influential people like you, to raise awareness and bring about change in our tech-driven landscape.



## **Cara Kasdorf, MAN, RD Registered Dietitian & Sport Nutrition Specialist**

As a dietitian who has specialized in sport nutrition for over 18 years, I see the increasing impact smart phone and social media use has on body image, eating habits and risk of disordered eating and eating disorders.

My goal is to create a safe space for athletes, which fosters connection with teammates, and a lifelong positive relationship with food and their bodies.



We hope that you can use this resource yourself and/or pass it along to coaches, trainers, artistic directors, and related sport personnel who are working closely with athletes so that we can change the narrative around smartphone use with team sports and make sport safer for our kids.

Dear Coaches/Administrators/Artistic Directors,

My name is Alison Yeung, a Family Physician working to advocate for adolescent mental health, and raising awareness around the impacts of smartphones and social media on youth. Alongside Cara Kasdorf, a Registered Dietician with a special interest in youth athletes, we are writing to you to promote smartphone-free spaces during team sports and other activities.

There is a growing body of evidence linking smartphone use to worse mental health outcomes, particularly if that use is excessive and replacing other pillars of development such as sleep and in-person socializing. To that end, smartphones can often act as barriers to genuine connection among teammates. When athletes are engrossed in their devices, they miss valuable opportunities for face-to-face interactions that foster trust, camaraderie, and teamwork. These relationships are vital not only for team dynamics but also for individual motivation. A team that communicates effectively and feels personally connected is more likely to perform well and support each other through challenges.

Furthermore, we know that athletes are already at higher risk of eating disorders and disordered eating than the general population. The pressure to maintain a curated online presence can lead to social comparison, anxiety, and a distorted self-image. Research indicates that exposure to idealized images and lifestyles can exacerbate feelings of inadequacy, particularly in sports where body image is scrutinized. According to a position statement by the Australian Institute of Sport and the National Eating Disorders Collaboration, there is a clear link between social media use and the development of disordered eating habits in high-performance athletes (Wells et al., 2020). Likewise, a scoping review highlighted the potential risks of social media on children and adolescents, including increased anxiety and the likelihood of eating disorders (Bozzola et al., 2022).

In light of these concerns, I urge you to consider establishing smartphone policies to minimize distractions and promote a healthy environment for your athletes. By doing so, we can enhance team bonding, motivation, and safeguard our young athletes' mental and physical well-being.

Suggestions may include:

- Discouraging using social media to promote oneself
- Having a 'phones away' policy during warmups, game times, tournaments, on buses etc.
- Posting a statement about phone-free zones in your gym/training space/studio
- Promoting 'safer' platforms for team group chats e.g. texting and WhatsApp vs Snapchat
- More organized 'team building' events/activities that don't involve phones
- Limiting/disabling team social media accounts so that those without phones are not excluded

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to your thoughts on this important issue. Below you will find a sample letter that could be emailed out to parents.

Feel free to alter this to your liking!

*Sincerely,*

**Dr. Alison Yeung**, MD, CCFP, Family Physician

Instagram: [thesmartphoneeffectmd](#)

[A Parent's Guide to Introducing Smartphones & Social Media](#)

**Cara Kasdorf**, MAN, RD, Registered Dietitian

Sport Nutrition & Eating Disorder Team Lead

Website: [blueprintnutrition.ca](#)

Instagram: [fuelling.youth.athletes](#) & [blueprintnutritionsport](#)

## **SAMPLE LETTER TO SEND TO PARENTS**

Dear Parents,

I hope this message finds you well. As we work towards strengthening our team dynamic and improving the overall experience for our players, we will be implementing a zero cell phone use policy for all team functions moving forward. This includes activities such as practices, games, team meals, bus rides, and any other team-related events.

There is a growing body of evidence linking smartphone use to worse mental health outcomes, particularly if that use is excessive and replacing other pillars of development such as sleep and in-person socializing. To that end, smartphones can often act as barriers to genuine connection among teammates. When athletes are engrossed in their devices, they miss valuable opportunities for face-to-face interactions that foster trust, camaraderie, and teamwork. These relationships are vital not only for team dynamics but also for individual motivation. A team that communicates effectively and feels personally connected is more likely to perform well and support each other through challenges.

Research also suggests that social media can fuel disordered eating and eating disorders in young athletes, as they seek approval online and fall victim to external validation and social comparison. Athletes are also at higher risk of eating disorders at baseline.

We believe that a cell phone policy within our team will reduce distractions, facilitate bonding, improve motivation, and preserve self-confidence.

We appreciate your understanding and support in helping our players disconnect from their phones and connect more with each other. We welcome any questions or feedback.

Sincerely,