



Caring for Young Athletes during the Coronavirus Pandemic



***A guide for parents and coaches
from Ertheo Sports & Education***

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INTRODUCTION

In the wake of the Coronavirus Pandemic, the sports world has come to a complete halt. Almost all sporting events, games, and competitions across the globe have been canceled or postponed. Sports events and [summer sports camps](#) for young athletes are no exception. While athletes everywhere are struggling to deal with the disappointing news, for young athletes, this news can be especially earthshattering.

Just like adult athletes, many young athletes have been training for months or even years for sports events or competitions that have recently been canceled. The difference is young athletes might have a much harder time accepting the reality of the situation and putting their worries or fears into perspective. So while adult athletes have likely already accepted the situation and begun to modify their training regimens accordingly, young athletes are likely still coping with the shock of the situation and wondering how such a catastrophe will impact their athletic careers.

For all athletes, young and old, it's important to accept the reality of the situation as soon as possible so they can focus on what's important right now - fulfilling their civic duty to fight the Coronavirus, maintaining a positive and resilient attitude, and continuing to develop as an athlete despite the difficult circumstances.

Do you know a young athlete struggling to stay positive and resilient amidst the uncertainty of the Coronavirus Pandemic? Here are some tips and resources to help young athletes stay positive, fit, happy, and healthy even during the worst of times.



UNDERSTANDING THEIR ANXIETY

The Coronavirus Pandemic has caused a great deal of uncertainty and stress for youth all around the world. For young athletes who have lost the ability to play their sport with no indication of when they might be able to continue to train, the anxiety caused by the Coronavirus Pandemic will likely be even greater.

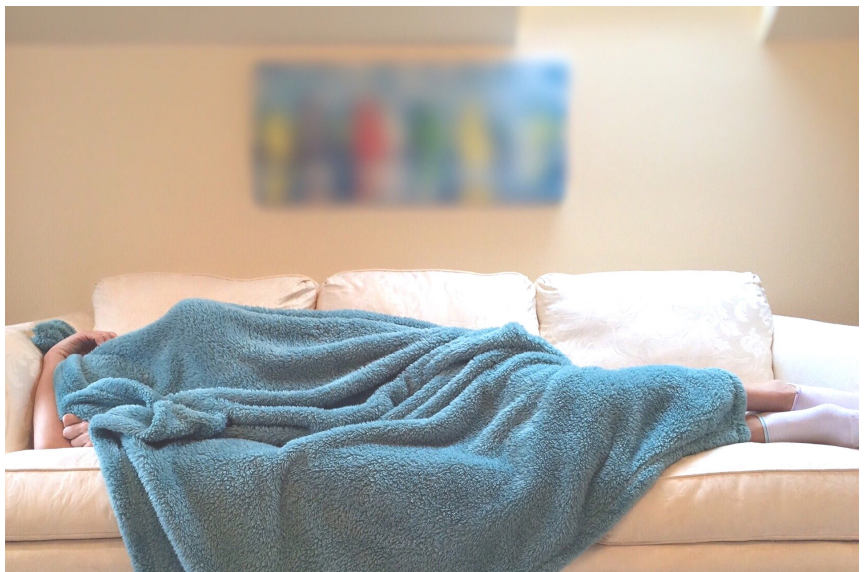
Many young athletes will experience stress caused by the uncertainty of when they'll be able to play again, or they may be worried about the future of their athletic careers. They may be wondering, "What does this mean for college?" Or "What does this mean for the tryouts I had coming up?" Or maybe they're asking themselves, "What about the big scouting tournament that just got canceled? What if that was my only chance?"

For other young athletes, the reality of the situation is difficult to face even in the present moment. For Julia Gagliardi, a senior at an American high school in New Jersey, the reality is just starting to sink in. "The best word is surreal," Julia says. "This all didn't really hit me until last Tuesday, which was the first day we had classes from home. All of a sudden, my classmates and I were like: Is this it?" As the captain of her softball team, she added, "It has been eating away at me because I want this season so badly. Me and all my teammates. This was going to be our year." You can read the rest of her story [here](#).

Many athletes find themselves in the same situation as Julia, struggling with the depressing news that their entire sports season has been canceled. Worst yet, many children and teenagers use sports as an outlet for their energy and a way to cope with the stress and anxiety of their everyday lives.

According to [said Dr. Rob Bell, a sport psychology coach](#), "The way many athletes cope with life is through their sport. If sport is okay and [they] are performing well, then life more easily works itself out. Once we remove [their] primary coping skill of sport," he added, "then [they] are now forced to deal in other ways, and [they] often lack those other coping skills."

With the global shutdown of youth sports, young athletes everywhere are not only experiencing heightened stress and anxiety, but they've also lost their outlet for managing their new stress levels. What can we do to help them manage their anxiety in such difficult and uncertain times?



ALLOWING THEM TO GRIEVE

The first step is **listening to them and letting them know it's okay to be upset**. For many young athletes, their sport means everything to them, and being an athlete is an important part of their identity.

[According to Dr. Bell](#), the emotions a young athlete may feel when faced with the reality that they won't be able to play their sport may be similar to the emotions they would feel in the wake of a major loss. "You'll need to treat this crisis as a major loss and/or death because the emotions experienced will be similar," he said.

Rebecca Colasanto, the system director of behavioral health for Bristol Health, feels similarly. In an [interview with ESPN](#), she commented "Some people are still in shock. We don't know how each athlete is coping with loss or grieving the loss of their season. But understand that it's normal for them to have different feelings." She added, "It's very easy to be angry. Like, 'Who decided this?' And it's very easy to be depressed. All of those feelings that we generally experience during the loss of a loved one can be true for the loss of this."

Adjusting to the reality of the situation may take time. Just like you'd allow them to grieve the loss of a loved one, you should **give them some time to adjust to the new reality** that they simply can't play their sport right now in the same way they did before.



HELPING THEM CREATE A HEALTHY ROUTINE

Once you've given them time to adjust and grieve, it might be a good idea to **help them create a healthy and active routine**.

According to Colasanto, "Going back to finding routines can alleviate some of the emotional strain [that young athletes are feeling]." Before the Coronavirus Pandemic, training, practices, and competitions took up a large majority of their time. Now, these athletes have to find other outlets of energy to keep them feeling structured. Colasanto says it simply: "Routines help people feel good."

A healthy and active routine can do more than help to alleviate stress. A routine can also help young athletes stay fit, so they'll be competition ready when all of this is over. They can easily find inspiration in some of their favorite sports stars.

[According to ABC News](#), Real Madrid captain Sergio Ramos has been posting videos of himself [training at his home gym with his three kids](#) playing by his side. Likewise, FC Barcelona goalkeeper Marc-André ter Stegen was seen jumping ropes and doing other exercises in his backyard. Young fans of Real Madrid and FC Barcelona might be inspired by Ramos and ter Stegen to create a healthy routine and continue training at home.



TALKING TO THEM ABOUT THEIR CIVIC DUTY

Another good idea is to help them put their fears and worries into perspective by **talking to them about how they're helping to prevent the spread of the virus** and save lives.

Even as adults, it's not always easy to see the bigger picture. We all have our days where it's easier to focus on what was taken away from us than it is to focus on how, by being socially responsible, we're saving lives all around the world. Just this simple reminder can make us all feel better about staying inside and complying with rules of social distancing.

For young athletes, it can be even more difficult to put their worries and fears into perspective. For them, being able to play their sport might be the most important thing in the world. But lives are at stake. Remind them that by putting their training on hold, they could be (and most likely will be) saving lives. Help them understand that they should feel proud to be playing a part in defeating the Coronavirus.

Lastly, just as their idols can help them create a healthy routine, their idols can also help to remind them of their civic duty. [Lionel Messi of FC Barcelona posted on Instagram](#): "It is an exceptional moment and we have to follow all the recommendations from the health authorities and public authorities. That is the only way that we can fight it effectively. It is time to be responsible and stay at home."

We should all feel proud of fulfilling our civic duty, staying at home as much as possible, and practicing social distancing. After all, we're saving lives. For young athletes, it's no different. They just might need to be reminded a bit more that what they're doing is honorable and that they should feel proud.



USING LESSONS FROM SPORTS TO HELP

As mentioned before, for many young athletes, playing a sport is part of their identity. So while they're unable to play or practice their sport, they'll likely feel like a part of them is missing. In extreme cases, as Dr. Bell and Rebecca Colasanto mentioned, young athletes may experience depression as they grieve the loss of their own identities.

But young athletes don't have to give up their identities as athletes during the Coronavirus Pandemic. In fact, they shouldn't. Rather, they should feel more connected than ever with their identities as athletes because everything they've learned in sports can help them through this difficult time. They can still be athletes during the Coronavirus Pandemic.

What does it mean to be an athlete during the Coronavirus Pandemic?

Being a team player - Sports teach kids the importance of teamwork, of working together to achieve a common goal. In the wake of the Coronavirus Pandemic, we must all work together to defeat the virus, stop the spread, and save lives. Being an athlete during the Coronavirus Pandemic means feeling honored to be a part of something bigger by putting training on hold, staying home, and following the rules.

Overcoming adversity - Sports teach kids the importance of overcoming adversity, the importance of standing up after they've been knocked down so they can continue to fight for their team. The Coronavirus Pandemic is adversity on a global scale. We've all been knocked down. For some, it will be difficult to get back up. For athletes, this adversity is just another obstacle to overcome as they work hard to achieve their goals.



USING LESSONS FROM SPORTS TO HELP

Embracing the challenge -

Sports teach kids the importance of embracing challenges because challenges provide opportunities to learn and grow. The Coronavirus Pandemic is presenting challenges for millions of people across the globe. Some people would rather give up than rise to the challenge. Being an athlete during the Coronavirus Pandemic means rising to the challenge and embracing it as an opportunity to learn and grow.



Being flexible - Sports also teach kids to be flexible. Through sports, kids quickly learn that they won't always get to play in the position they want or for the amount of time that they want to. They also learn that they must adapt to the different playing styles of their teammates if they want to be successful as a team. The Coronavirus Pandemic has changed millions of lives around the world almost instantly. Some people will have difficulty adapting to the changes. Being an athlete during the Coronavirus Pandemic means being flexible and seamlessly adapting to the new lifestyle.

What's it mean to be an athlete during the Coronavirus Pandemic?

Pol Lorente, fitness trainer for Spanish soccer club Leganés, is the perfect example. The whole country of Spain is on lockdown which means players can't leave their homes, and many don't have access to gym equipment. Still, instead of feeling sorry for himself and his team, Lorente embraced the challenge and came up with a creative way to lead his team through workouts. Using the Twitch app, an elastic band, a couple of large water bottles as weight, and a chair, he created [an at-home workout for his team](#). Lorente showed us all that even in the worst of times, it's still possible to demonstrate the flexibility and determination of a true athlete.

Sports teach young athletes many life lessons. Now is the perfect time for young athletes to show the world that being an athlete means more than performing well on the field or court. Being an athlete means embracing the challenge, adapting to the new lifestyle, and finding a way to feel like a winner no matter what.

CONNECTING WITH THEIR TEAMMATES

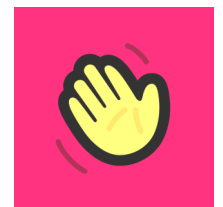
It's also a great idea to encourage young athletes to stay connected to their teammates virtually.

Young athletes are used to spending a lot of time with their teammates. The inability to spend time with their teammates and friends could feel like another loss for young athletes. Staying connected to teammates virtually is a great way to avoid this feeling of loss.

Furthermore, their teammates can serve as a great support group. Teammates can share what they're doing at home to stay healthy and fit during the Coronavirus Pandemic. They can inspire each other and help each other stay positive even in the darkest of times.

Lastly, even if the Coronavirus Pandemic has postponed or canceled a team's entire season, once sports are back in session, the team will still be a team. Young athletes shouldn't let the inability to see their team destroy the bonds that they created before the pandemic.

Fortunately, these days, there are so many ways for teams to stay connected. Facetime, Zoom, Skype, Whatsapp, and Google Hangouts are just some of the most popular tools that teams can use to stay connected.



KEEPING THEM FIT AND HEALTHY

Creating a routine is one of the best ways to help young athletes during the Coronavirus Pandemic. As mentioned earlier, a healthy and active routine can do more than alleviate stress and anxiety. The proper routine can help young athletes stay fit and healthy so that when they're allowed to compete again, they're ready.

For young athletes, a healthy and active routine consists of three components: [proper nutrition](#), fitness, and [sufficient sleep](#). When creating a routine for young athletes, it's important to take all three components into account and balance them the proper way. A great idea is to find inspiration in the routine they had before the Coronavirus Pandemic.

Let's use Pablo's story as an example: Pablo is 14 years old and plays soccer. Before the Coronavirus Pandemic, Pablo would wake up early for school, around 6:30 AM and eat a nutritious breakfast. Then, he would go to school and focus on his studies from 8:00 AM to 2:00 PM, taking a short break at noon for a midmorning snack. At 2:30 PM, after school, he would eat a filling and nutritious lunch. Then, he would either rest or do some homework until it was time to attend soccer practice from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM. After practice, he would have dinner with his family. Then, he would play video games with his friends or enjoy some other leisure activity until 10:30 PM when he would go to bed.

Pablo's routine before the Coronavirus Pandemic was healthy, active, and balanced. There's no reason for this to change while Pablo stays at home during the pandemic. The only difference is, depending on Pablo's unique situation, he may have less school work to do while at home. Even as far as school work is concerned, there are plenty of educational apps and resources that he can use or download to stay mentally active during his time at home.

The rest of Pablo's routine can stay almost exactly the same. He can still eat the same foods at the same time of day, and he can even exercise at the same time of day as well. There are plenty of home workout apps and programs, especially now with so many gyms offering live-streaming classes. Some gyms are even offering free classes to the public for no other reason than to fulfill their civic duty. The programs might not last as long as his practices usually would, but the right programs would certainly get him sweating just as much.



THE BEST STREAMING SERVICES AND APPS

There are many **streaming services and apps available for young athletes**, each with a wide variety of programs to choose from. Check out some of our recommendations for streaming services and apps for young athletes to stay healthy and fit during the Coronavirus Pandemic:

Home workout programs from [Beachbody On Demand](#)

Beachbody On Demand is an online streaming service that allows members to stream more than 35 different workout programs for all fitness levels and objectives. Most programs require little to no gym equipment and include workout calendars and meal plans for maximum results. You can choose to purchase the programs separately or you can sign up for a Beachbody On Demand memberships. **The 3-month membership includes a 14-day free trial and is \$39.95 each quarter after that.** Click [here](#) to read about Beachbody's official age requirements and recommendations.

Home workout programs from [The Daily Burn](#)

The Daily Burn is an online streaming service that delivers video collections suitable for all levels and objectives. Options range from low-intensity physical rehab guidance to high-intensity cardio, strength and cross training video workout classes. Most programs require at least basic gym equipment like dumbbells and a yoga mat. Some programs require extensive equipment like a pull-up or chin-up bar, a medicine ball, and/or a box jump box. Most workouts also include workout calendars and meal plans for maximum results. **The Daily Burn is currently offering a free 60-day trial. The Daily Burn subscription is \$19.95 per month.** Click [here](#) to read more about The Daily Burn's official age requirements and recommendations.

Home workout programs from the [Nike Training Club App](#)

The Nike Training Club App is a versatile app featuring workouts and training programs for all fitness levels and objectives. Some programs require no equipment whatsoever. Others require a full gym. The app is easy to use and offers many search options to find the right workouts and programs for your personal fitness goals. Usually the NTC App offers free content and premium content available only by subscription. In response to the Coronavirus Pandemic, **the NTC App is offering all of their premium content for FREE until further notice.**

Home workouts channels on [Youtube](#)

There is a wide variety of home workout channels on Youtube, and a couple are especially well-suited to young athletes who want to improve their physical fitness. The best Youtube home workouts channels for young athletes include Joe Wick's The Body Coach TV, the Fitness Blender channel, and the HASfit channel. Content on all three channels is FREE. In addition, all three channels feature a wide variety of videos for all fitness levels and objectives, but certain playlists and series are better suited to young athletes. You'll find our suggestions in the next section.

THE BEST HOME WORKOUT PROGRAMS FOR YOUNG ATHLETES

There are many at-home workout programs out there, but not so many have been specifically designed for young athletes. Nevertheless, there are quite a few at-home workout programs available (designed for both adults and children) that young athletes can use to stay fit and healthy during the Coronavirus Pandemic.

At Ertheo, we researched some of the best and most popular at-home workout programs on the market to determine which programs are the best programs for young athletes of different ages and levels. In the next section, you'll find a list of our best recommendations.

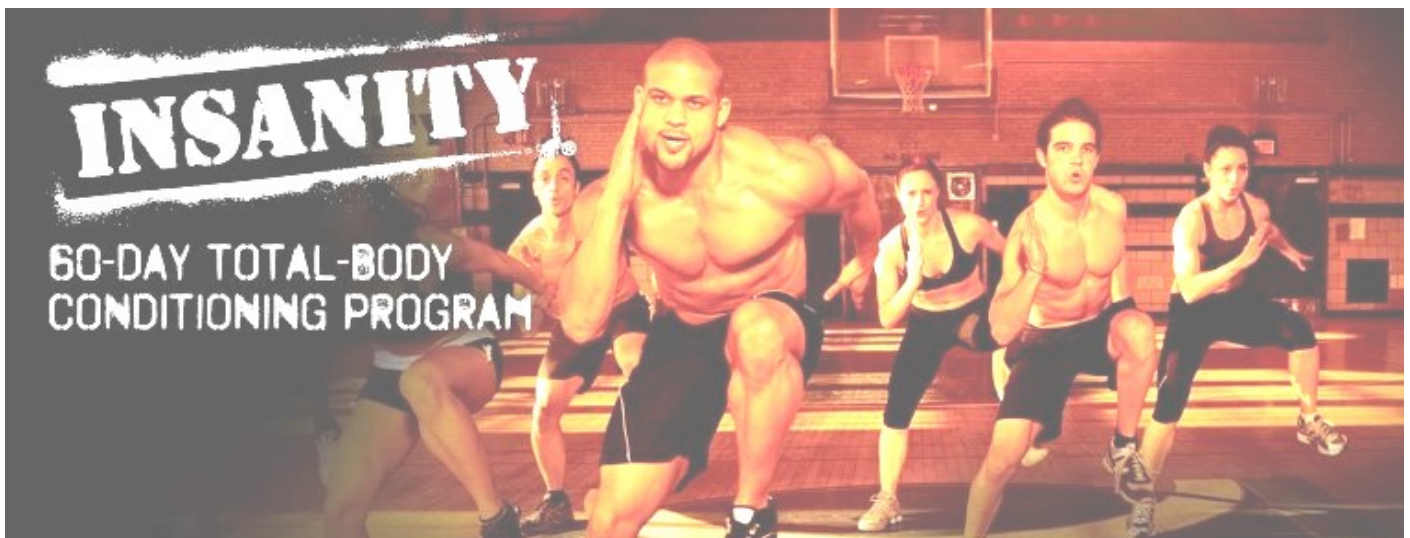
A note to parents: Please review the workout programs in the following section before offering them to your child. Children develop at all different paces and what might be appropriate for one 12-year-old might be too advanced for another 12-year-old. It's up to parents to determine whether or not the programs listed below are appropriate for their children's age, skill, and fitness level.



THE MOST INTENSIVE HOME WORKOUT PROGRAMS

*We only recommend these programs for very physically fit athletes **at least 16 years old**. Parents should always review the programs to determine whether they're appropriate for the fitness level of their children.*

Insanity from Beachbody on Demand. An advanced workout program inspired by a variety of sports including American football, boxing, basketball, and track and field. Considered one of the most challenging fitness programs on the market. Great to improve power, speed, core strength, and cardio. **No equipment required.** Program consists of 11 workouts. Workouts last 30 minutes to an hour each. [Read a review from Webmd.](#)



P90X3 from Beachbody on Demand. An advanced workout program that guarantees a lean and ripped body in 90 days. Inspired by periodization and a tactic called “muscle confusion”. Great for training specific large muscle groups as well as improving cardio and power. Requires a set of dumbbells or resistance bands and a chin-up bar. Program consists of 16 workouts broken down into 4 core areas: Resistance, Power, Cardio, and Core Flex & Balance. [Read a review from Webmd.](#)



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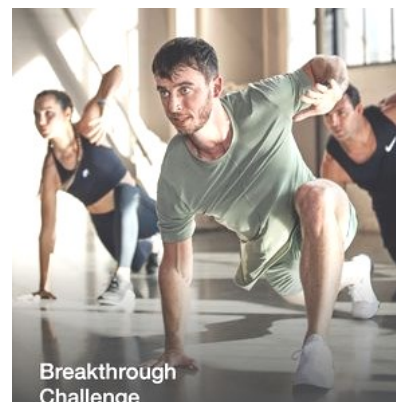
Daily Burn Spartan from The Daily Burn. An advanced workout program inspired by Spartan Races, the world's best obstacle course races. Daily Burn Spartan is broken down into two phases. During Phase One, athletes work out three days a week and build up their strength and endurance. Phase Two cranks up the intensity pushing athletes to work out four days a week, with exercises designed to increase their athleticism. The videos are 25 to 35 minutes long and the program lasts for 6 weeks. One the downside, this program requires quite a bit of equipment: Dumbbells, a box (for box jumping), a resistance band, a dowel, and a yoga mat.



Tactical Bodyweight Training from The Daily Burn. An advanced workout program that focuses on body weight exercises to gain strength and increase mobility. TBT workouts are divided into three tiers of movement complexity. Tier 1 focuses on increasing mobility, Tier 2 fine-tunes your body's natural movements for maximum efficiency, and Tier 3 is all about unloading — the process of releasing stress and restoring tissue to its resting length. The videos are between 20

and 45 minutes long and the program lasts for one month. Recommended equipment includes a set of dumbbells, a yoga mat, a foam roller and a tennis ball.

Breakthrough Challenge from the NTC App. An advanced workout program featuring 20 workouts in 28 days for strength training and cardio. The program is broken up into 4 stages designed to maximize your benefits and overall experience. Workout videos are between 30 and 45 minutes long. The program requires minimal equipment (a set of dumbbells and a yoga mat), although some exercises can be completed with no equipment.



THE BEST INTERMEDIATE HOME WORKOUT PROGRAMS

*We only recommend these programs for athletes **at least 14 years old** who train at at least an intermediate level. Parents should always review the programs to determine whether they're appropriate for the fitness level of their children.*

Core De Force from Beachbody on Demand. An intermediate workout program inspired by mixed martial arts. Great for cardio and core strength. No gym equipment required. Program consists of 10 workouts. Workouts last 27 to 47 minutes each. [Read a review from a fitness professional.](#)



Undeclared from The Daily Burn. An intermediate workout program inspired by mixed martial arts. The program consists of fast-paced rhythmic cardio kickboxing and HIIT workouts designed to improve cardio conditioning and build strength. The videos are about 30 minutes long and the program lasts for 6 weeks. Recommended equipment includes a set of dumbbells.



IntelliBurn from The Daily Burn. An intermediate workout program featuring all kinds of workouts to improve strength, speed, flexibility, and power. The workouts vary in difficulty and length, and the program trains different muscles each day. Equipment required includes a medicine ball, a yoga mat, a kettle bell, an exercise ball, a set of dumbbells, a pull-up bar, a resistance band, and a box.



THE BEST INTERMEDIATE HOME WORKOUT PROGRAMS

*We only recommend these programs for athletes **at least 14 years old** who train at at least an intermediate level. Parents should always review the programs to determine whether they're appropriate for the fitness level of their children.*

Burn with Kristy Godso from the NTC App. An intermediate workout program featuring only bodyweight exercises designed to build confidence in the body and the mind. Workouts feature quick, high-intensity moves and are between 20 and 45 minutes long. The complete program lasts a total of 6 weeks. No equipment required.



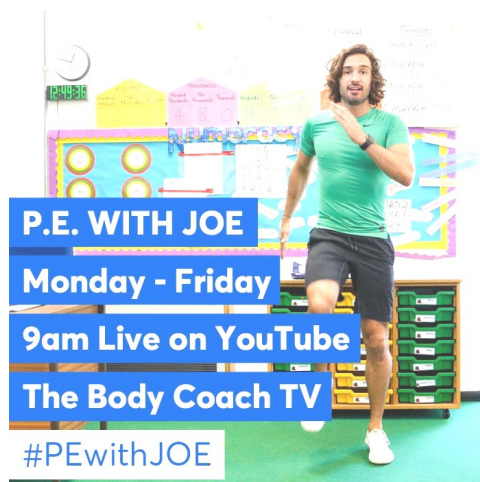
Fitness Blender HIIT Series from Youtube. Fitness Blender is a free healthy and fitness Youtube channel featuring over 600 full length workout videos. Workouts are designed for a variety of fitness levels and objectives. The HIIT Series from fitness blender features intensive workouts that place a high amount of demand on the muscles and require some exercise experience, making them perfect for intermediate athletes at least 14 years old. Videos vary greatly in length, from 5 minutes to an hour and a half. For most videos, no equipment is required. Visit fitnessblender.com and find the right workout plan for your personal goals for less than \$5.



THE BEST HOME WORKOUT PROGRAMS FOR 12 AND UP

*We only recommend these programs for athletes **at least 12 years old**. Parents should always review the programs to determine whether they're appropriate for the fitness level of their children.*

[The Body Coach TV P.E. with Joe Series](#) from Youtube. Joe Wicks, also known as The Body Coach, is a celebrity fitness coach with his own Youtube channel called The Body Coach TV. His **P.E. with Joe** series is perfect for young athletes from 10 to 14 years old who are serious about their physical conditioning and athletic improvement. Joe's workouts are bodyweight workouts featuring simple functional movements like squats, lunges, and push-ups. The workouts are 30 minutes long (with a unique video each day) and require no gym equipment. The program and channel is FREE.



[HASfit Fat Burning Workouts](#) from Youtube. HASfit is a free health and fitness Youtube channel featuring over 1,000 full length home workouts. Two coaches lead the programs with one doing the more challenging exercises and the other doing the slightly easier modified version of the same exercise. Their Fat Burning Workout Series is perfect for young athletes between 10 and 14 years old. The series features over 60 videos of all different lengths and workout styles. Some workouts require weights, medicine

balls, or other equipment, but for young athletes under 14, **the no equipment exercises are recommended**. There are plenty to choose from. The program and channel is FREE.

[Fitness Blender Coordination, Agility, and Balance series](#) from Youtube. Fitness Blender is a free healthy and fitness Youtube channel featuring over 600 full length workout videos. Workouts are designed for a variety of fitness levels and objectives. The Coordination, Agility, and Balance series is especially designed for athletes. Most videos are between 15 and 35 minutes long and require no equipment. Some equipment is required for some videos, but for younger athletes, **we recommend only bodyweight workouts**. Visit fitnessblender.com and find the right workout plan for your personal goals for less than \$5.



THE BEST HOME WORKOUT PROGRAMS FOR UNDER 12

These programs are fun cardio workouts that young athletes can enjoy while they get fit. Parents can join in too!

Kids and Family Collection

from Beachbody On Demand. A fun workout program designed to get the whole family moving. Videos vary in length, ranging from 5 minutes to 55 minutes of fitness fun. **In response to the Coronavirus Pandemic, Beachbody is currently offering the Kids and Family Collection at home workouts for FREE.**



The Body Coach TV Kids Workouts to do at Home Series from Youtube. Joe Wicks, also known as The Body Coach, is a celebrity fitness coach with his own Youtube channel called The Body Coach TV. His Kids Workouts to do at Home series is perfect for young athletes under 10 years old. The videos are between 5 and 15 minutes long and are designed to keep kids entertained while they get moving and sweating. Most exercises are simple, traditional exercises like jumping jacks and squats, perfect for young children who are just beginning their sports journeys.



ADDITIONAL TIPS FOR YOUNG ATHLETES

Here are some additional tips to help young athletes stay healthy and fit during the Coronavirus Pandemic:



Make sure they stick to specific mealtimes. Over-snacking can be tempting while spending so much time at home.



Make sure they have the space they need to complete home workouts. They might need to move around some furniture.



Have them set goals for themselves and track their progress as they complete their home workout programs. They make better progress, and they'll probably enjoy the workouts more.



Have you heard of gamification? Gamification is the application of typical elements of game playing (point scoring, competition with others, rules of play, etc.) to activities that wouldn't otherwise be games. Have them share your goals with their teammates and make a game out of it. Some friendly competition is a great motivator to achieve their goals.



Make sure they have some leisure time in their day. Resting the body and mind is extra important in times of stress.



Set a consistent sleep schedule. Fortunately, young athletes will probably get the chance to sleep a lot more since they don't have to go to school. That doesn't mean they should go to sleep extra late or wake up extra late. A messy sleep schedule will mean a messy routine and less motivation to continue living a healthy and active life.



A FINAL NOTE FROM THE ERTHEO TEAM

The Coronavirus Pandemic has been a tragic event for millions of people from all walks of life, and young athletes are no exception. Some tell stories about how they were unable to compete in what would have been the final tournament of their sports careers. Others are crushed by the news that their entire season has been ruined. For some, major scouting opportunities have been canceled with no indication of whether or not more opportunities are waiting for them in the future.

Whatever the individual circumstance, this is a tough time for young athletes everywhere. And of course, it's also a difficult time for parents and coaches who have to look into the teary eyes of the children they care about.

That being said, with patience, understanding, and a little guidance, parents and coaches can help young athletes feel better and stay true to themselves even in the worst of times.

We hope this guide has provided you with the knowledge, resources, and inspiration you need to help the young athlete you care about stay happy, healthy, and fit as we all fight to end the Coronavirus Pandemic.



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