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wellbodykc

Eating, A Race Car Analogy:

Let's start with an analogy. A race car may have the most horse power (speed), the best driver (mind, attitude, dedication), the strongest body frame (strength), the most expensive tires (equipment, sponsorship), and the best pit crew (coaches, parents, team mates)- and still not make it off the starting line if someone forgot to add the right fuel!

And not just any fuel, like what your parents put in their Sports Utility vehicle (87 or 89 octane)... a race car requires fuel that allows fast speed, long races, and high competition (100+ octane!). This fuel is more expensive and yes, a race car needs LOTS of it- depending on the race- the car may need several pit stops for refueling. Why? Because it burns the fuel so quickly when the driver is constantly going faster and faster and demanding more and more. Athletes are like race cars. They demand energy for practice and competition and then require more energy for re-building and gaining strength. An athlete needs a healthy meal before competition, hydration and possible healthy snacks during competition, and then a healthy meal for rebuilding and strengthening after competition.

Athletes that eat poorly (or not enough) can not perform at their peak, can not rebuild after a long workout, and can not gain endurance and muscle. If an athlete is doing well while eating poorly- they would even be faster, stronger, and healthier if they ate better. Just like a car- it can run on 87 octane- but runs smoother, faster, and more powerfully on 92 or 100 octane.

Race cars use up almost all their fuel during the race (like an athlete during practice) and need to be refueled often. And a car that doesn't get enough energy with gas- or an athlete that doesn't get enough energy with food- will sputter to a stop while the competition passes them by. Race cars that get too little gas (not enough calories) or bad gas (fast food, junk food, soda) ultimately have problems with winning the race and have problems with the car (an athlete will get weak bones, less muscle, trouble concentrating)

Athletes sometimes become overly concerned with eating because they see their non athletic friends gaining unhealthy weight. Kids that are sedentary- playing video games or watching TV are more like SUV than race cars. SUVs travel more slowly (not as much exercise), and therefore use fuel but not as quickly. The left over fuel becomes excess weight in an SUV (person not exercising), while any excess fuel in a race car is helpful to beat its competition in the final laps of the race (an athlete uses excess calories to build stronger bones and more muscle). Although nothing in humans is as simple as this analogy to cars- it is similar and essential for young athletes to understand.