

Nutrition Tips for Training

Proper nutrition can help enhance athletic performance. Eating a balanced diet can help provide the energy you need to fuel performance, continue to build muscle and provide proper mental fitness. You are more likely to be tired and perform poorly during sports when you do not get enough calories, carbs, protein and fluids.

The ideal diet for an athlete is not vastly different from the diet recommended for any healthy person. However, the amount of each food group you need will depend on the amount of training you do and the amount of time you spend on workout/practice/games. Avoid exercising on an empty stomach as that will lead to poor performance.

Nutrition and Recovery Mistakes

Skipping meals or only eating one big meal will lead to higher body fat with less muscle and much less energy. Spread meals out and eat healthy snacks. If a player misses a meal, he/she could drink a protein/carb shake before practice. Do not use vending machines to replace meals. The nutritional value, if any, of vending machine snacks will not fuel your body the way you need it to. Hydration is just as important as a balanced diet to keep your body at peak performance. Most athletes go into practice on too few calories and early stages of dehydration. That absolutely will not lend itself to a successful practice session. You must be conscious of your food and water intake and fuel your body for performance. It's common for athletes to lose up to 10 pounds during the season which can significantly decrease performance. Be aware of your nutrition. Athletes are often sleep deprived. Not getting the right amount of sleep leads to low levels of performance, bad moods, slower reaction time up to 20%, slower speed and a higher risk of injury. Just one night of partying can decrease an athlete's reaction time by 300%! Proper rest can cut mental errors by 50%. 50%! Just by getting enough sleep! Make getting enough rest a priority. Improving sleep and nutrition will take care of nearly 90% of recovery.

Basketball players can get plenty of protein from eating properly but protein drinks containing whey are also an alternative when proper nutrition is not available. Protein meals, or a 20-40g protein shake, before bed is great for recovery and can boost muscle growth. Do not discount the value of carbohydrates. Basketball players need a high carbohydrate diet to provide the energy needed to fuel an athlete's body.

Aim to eat healthy 80-90% of the time. The other 10-20% of the time you can enjoy pizza, ice cream or a good bacon cheeseburger and fries. That is a form of moderation that works long term. Avoid foods out of a box or a bag.... such as candy, cookies, chips, etc. and really limit or eliminate fast food altogether.

Fueling Your Body for Practice and Games

On practice and game days, you need to be eating every 3-4 hours without skipping any meals including breakfast and lunch. Stay away from fatty and high fiber foods since those types of foods use more energy to digest and can leave you feeling sleepy, tired, overly full or even cause a stomachache.

Start drinking fluids/water early in the day to pre-hydrate. Use fruits and vegetables to add fluids. Also consider healthy smoothies, juice and tea with low/no sugar. Take a water bottle with you so you can drink fluids throughout the day. You must hydrate your body for performance to maintain a well hydrated state throughout practice/game, minimize your potential for injury and muscle cramps and improve your ability to recover from the demands on your body. Without proper hydration, performance declines, your heart works harder than necessary, you can become nauseous, exhausted, have headaches and/or muscle cramps.

Sports drinks should be used for rehydration to replenish electrolytes lost through sweating. During periods of heavy exertion, the body loses minerals and fluids. It is important to replace these, and sports drinks are helpful in that, especially in replacing sodium levels which can go dangerously low after extended periods of sweating and when only plain water has been consumed. Be careful not to overdo sports drinks though. Many of them are high in sugar that your body does not need.

Meal and Snack Tips for Fueling an Athlete

Breakfast is especially important so do not skip it. When preparing your meal, try at least 20g of protein. If you are going to be practicing early in the day, eat a snack that is high in carbs and easy to digest 60-90 minutes before. Some examples of 20g protein breakfast options are eggs, avocado, almonds, peanut butter, fruit smoothie made with Greek yogurt. If you are going to be practicing early in the day, eat a snack that is high in carbs and easy to digest 60-90 minutes before. Some healthy carb options include oatmeal, granola bar, waffles, trail mix, yogurt, whole grain toast.

Lunch should consist of a healthy balance of protein (20-30g), grains, carbs, fruit and water. An example would be a turkey sandwich on whole grain bread with low fat cheese, Greek yogurt with a banana and a bottle of water. Another option: grilled chicken wrap, yogurt smoothie, an apple and a serving of low-fat milk.

Pre-workout/practice/game snacks should contain about 30g of carbs and no more than 10g of protein. Always remember to stay away from sugary sodas with your meal and snacks. Nothing is better for the body than water.

Have a pre-game meal 3-4 hours before your game to help with energy needs. One good pre-game meal will not make up for poor nutrition in the days leading up to a game. Be aware that a large meal will take about 4 hours to digest. A small meal will take about 2 hours and a liquid meal such as a protein shake will take about an hour to digest. Plan ahead since you do not want to try to play on a completely full stomach.

Halftime eating should consist of 30-60 grams of carbohydrates such as an energy bar or orange wedges with a sports drink. If you play most of the first half of the game, you should eat small solid foods at halftime to reload on energy for the second half. Four ounces of fluid every 20 minutes is recommended.

After a game/workout/practice your muscles feel bigger because of an increase in blood flow. They are super absorbent and soak up protein to build muscle. Eat protein every 3-4 hours throughout the day after a heavy workout and add carbohydrates for energy. Muscles can continue to get stronger for at least 24 hours after a workout!

Be careful not to make these mistakes for your post-game meal: greasy, fatty foods like donuts, cheeseburgers, nachos, fries, and chips will not refuel your body but will decrease performance. Too much protein or too many carbs is not good either. Find the correct balance for you and eat to fuel your body.

Sample eating schedule:

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| 7:00 am | Breakfast |
| 10:00 am | Morning Snack |
| 12:00 pm | Lunch |
| 1:30 pm | Pre-practice snack |
| 2:30 pm | Practice |
| 3:30 pm | Rehydrate, strength/conditioning |
| 5:00 pm | Recovery shake or snack |
| 6:00 pm | Dinner |
| 9:30 pm | Evening snack |

Healthy Snacks

Healthy Snacks are an important part of an athlete's diet and help ensure adequate fuel, improve recovery, and increase mental performance. Stay away from junk food, sweets and fried foods. Those are empty calories and can slow fueling and muscle recovery. Keep healthy snacks in your backpack or locker for quick access. It takes less than 5 minutes to eat a banana and drink low fat chocolate milk. Make a habit of grabbing a snack every 2-3 hours to keep your body fueled. And read for the day's exertion. Bananas, raisins, granola bars and beef jerky are great options. If you get to the point where you are showing signs of hunger, you have waited too long and should eat as soon as possible. Pay attention to the following indicators: fatigue, headache, shakiness and poor concentration. An athlete needs to recognize hunger cues to maximize energy and ensure peak performance. And always be sure to hydrate.

Healthy Snack Options

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fresh Fruit – Grapes or Apple slices• Raisins• Dried fruit• Graham crackers• Veggies• Dry cereal• Pretzels• Low fat Greek yogurt• Low fat pudding• Dried edamame• Granola bar• Applesauce - Mott's (no sugar)• Nuts – (15 cashews, almonds, peanuts, pistachios ~ 100 calories) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fruit with peanut butter or cheese• Graham Crackers or pretzels with peanut butter• Sunflower seeds• Cereal with milk• Trail Mix• Oatmeal• Low-Fat String Cheese• Popcorn• Greek Yogurt Parfait• Whole Wheat Fig Newtons• Carrots with Hummus• Soup• Low-Fat Yogurt Smoothies• Low-Fat Milk or Chocolate Milk• Dried Beef Jerky – one bag |
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Fast Food

Make smart choices when eating out. Avoid high calorie/fat meal. Instead of ordering two double burgers and a large order of fries, choose a salad with light or low-fat dressing and a small fry. Drink water or unsweetened tea. Order baked foods over fried and grilled over crispy. Steamed, broiled and roasted options are all good choices too. Do not “super-size” and limit desserts and sugary sweets.

| Restaurant/Fast Food | Healthy Choice |
|----------------------|--|
| Burger King | Hamburger no mayo BK Broiler- no special sauce Chicken Whopper Jr- no mayo Whopper Jr – no mayo Chicken Caesar or Garden Salad Light or Fat free Dressing |
| McDonald's | Small Hamburger Grilled Chicken Sandwich-no mayo Grilled Chicken Salad-fat free dressing Egg McMuffin Caesar Salad Chef Salad |
| Taco Bell | Bean Burrito Regular Soft Taco/Chicken Soft Taco |
| Wendy's | Chili – larger or small Grilled Chicken Sandwich- no mayo Grilled Chicken Salad Spring Mix Salad/Mandarin Chix Salad Hamburger- no mayo |
| Subway | All low fat subs Light mayo, baked chips, with water Add all vegetables |

Sample Meal For 180 Pound Male Athlete

Breakfast- 2 cups of whole grain cereal with 12oz of skim milk, banana, 12oz of orange juice

Snack - apple, 2 tbsp of peanut butter, 2oz of pretzels

Lunch - turkey sandwich on wheat bread, baby carrots, chocolate pudding cup

Snack - (before practice or game) – 20oz of Gatorade, granola bar

Dinner - 3 cups of spaghetti with marinara sauce, tossed salad with dressing, 3 pieces of garlic toast, 12oz skim milk

Golden Rules for Sleep

Get the required amount of sleep every night
9 hours for everyone under 26

Stick to regular sleep-wake schedule
Go to bed and wake up within an hour of the same time every night/morning.

Keep bedroom clutter to a minimum

Keep bedroom reserved just for sleeping

Keep bedroom cool (65-67 degrees), quiet and dark

Avoid caffeine after 2 pm

Don't consume alcohol within 3 hours of bedtime

Cut out nicotine

Have a pillow that provides adequate support

Limit the use of electronics within an hour of bedtime

Have a pre-bed routine

- Hot shower

- Light stretching

- High-carb snack

- Listen to relaxing music

Eliminate disturbances

- Use ear plugs

- Eye covers

- Ambient noises

Cool the room to 65-67 degrees

Clear your mind as best as you can