

## Nutrition Tips for Athletes

If you are an athlete, the food you fuel your body with is very important to help you perform at your best. Regardless of what sport you participate in, good nutrition can help to increase your endurance and prevent dehydration and injury. Follow these tips to help you eat to compete:

- Stay hydrated- Dehydration can hurt your performance so drink plenty of fluids before, during and after physical activity. Water works great for staying hydrated so carry a water bottle with you throughout the day so you always have some on hand. Sports drinks, which contain fluid, glucose and electrolytes, are also a good option, especially in hot weather or for activities lasting more than an hour.
- Eat regularly and don't skip meals- It is important to keep your body and muscles well fueled throughout the day to ensure you have plenty of energy and to avoid drops in blood sugar which can leave you feeling fatigued. Aim for 3-6 meals or snacks each day. Note: If you choose to do intermittent fasting, please consult with a registered dietitian or qualified health professional for recommendations and tips.
- Practice MyPlate- Although athletes often have higher energy needs, both athletes and non-athletes should eat a well-balanced diet that includes the food groups emphasized in MyPlate ([www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov)) including lean meats, fruits and vegetables, dairy products and whole grains. Eating enough servings from each of these food groups helps to ensure that your body gets all the nutrients that it needs for good health.
- Count on Carbs- Carbohydrates are the bodies preferred energy source and help keep your muscles fueled during activity. Most of your calories should come from carbohydrates and good sources include whole grain pasta and bread, brown rice, cereal, fruits, vegetables and milk. Aim to eat a variety of carbohydrates and balance refined grains with whole grains.
- Power up with Protein- Protein helps to build and repair tissues, including muscle. Most athletes need slightly more protein than non-athletes but excessive amounts are unnecessary and offer no added performance benefits. Good sources of protein include lean meats, poultry, fish, eggs, dairy products, beans, nuts and seeds, and nut and seed butters.
- Fuel Up With Healthy Fats- Healthy fats play many important roles in our body and are necessary for health. Fat helps transport fat soluble vitamins throughout our body, provides a concentrated energy source and helps provide energy for longer duration activities. Most of the fat in our diet should come from poly and mono unsaturated fats. Good sources include oils such as olive and canola, fish such as salmon or tuna (which provide heart healthy omega-3's), avocados, and nuts and seeds.
- Eat Smart Before and After You Compete- Before a workout or game, eat a small meal or snack that is light and easy to digest. Choose foods that are rich in carbohydrate, moderate in protein and low in fat. Aim to finish eating between 1-4 hours before your physical activity to allow enough time for your food to digest. After your workout, in addition to replacing lost fluids, it is important to refuel your muscles. Choose a meal or snack that is rich in carbohydrate to replenish glycogen stores and protein to help repair muscles. Aim to eat within 2 hours of completing your physical activity.

This medical and/or nutritional information is not intended to be a substitute for individual advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.