



Eating for Top Performance

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Nutrition Self Assessment

Sports Nutrition Keys

- Plan a strategic eating routine to improve performance
- Fuel well all day long—especially before, during, and after workouts
- Include quality foods and beverages jam-packed with energy, growth, healing, and protective nutrients
- Implement a recovery nutrition program after workouts and competitions
- Keep your body hydrated all day every day
- Stay hydrated during workouts and competitions
- Use supplements wisely

Allow foods and fluids to WORK for YOU

A well-designed nutrition gameplan can:

- Enhance performance...speed, strength, power, and stamina
- Improve academic performance, mood, and decision-making
- Optimize body composition
- Delay fatigue and enhance energy levels during exercise and all day long
- Lead to better and faster recovery
- Reduce soreness and inflammation
- Minimize injury risk and improve return-to-play time after injury or surgery
- Enhance immunity
- Allow you to excel at your sport for years and years to come

Eat to fuel your working muscles

To get the most out of your workouts, and, in turn, out of your performance, developing a strategic eating plan is crucial to your success as an athlete. You can't expect your body to train at a high level without providing the best possible fuel at least *most* of the time. You've probably heard that your body is like a car—give it the right fuel, add extras like quality protein sources, antioxidants, healthy fats, and fluids—and you are no different than keeping a high-performance car engine going strong.

Remember that your diet need not be perfect. Even small changes can lead to significant improvements in your performance and health status. It's all about the habits and routines you practice *most* of the time. Occasional splurges or treats fit in a top performance nutrition gameplan as long as *most* food choices, portion sizes, and fueling times are right on target.

Eat consistently during the day

Because your body relies on consistent fuel for peak performance, eating at similar meal times throughout the day helps keep you stocked with the carbohydrates (energy for workouts), protein (needed to repair and build tissue), and fat (important to enhance endurance, healing, and recovery) you need. Whether you prepare your own food at home, eat in your school dining hall or training table, or eat at a local restaurant, planning your eating routine ahead of time is important. It's as simple as this: When planning your class and workout schedule, consciously plan in times for meals and snacks so you are eating at least every 3-4 hours during the day.

WARNING Be wary of “Bottom Heavy” diets. This refers to the tendency to undereat throughout the day and overeate during the evening. Some athletes’ bottom heavy diets result from busy schedules, failing to plan ahead, lack of hunger during the day, or fear of eating before workouts. It’s crucial to take in fuel when your body needs fuel—which is all day long. Try to eat 2/3 of your calories during the day and 1/3 during the evening. Start by slowly increasing your daytime meal frequency and portion sizes and decreasing portion sizes in the evening if this is a problem area for you.

Develop a solid eating routine

Developing a consistent nutrition routine starts with being aware of what you eat, especially before and after workouts. Athletes should eat a meal or snack 1 to 3 hours prior to every workout and a recovery meal or snack within 30 minutes of completing hard or long workouts.

Consistently eating a smart breakfast is another key to athletic success. Consider this: When you get up in the morning, your body has not taken in fuel for a long period of time—in some cases, 10 or more hours. Eating as soon as possible after you wake up allows your body to attain the fuel it needs to jump-start your engine—helping you think more clearly, keeping your blood sugar up, and allowing your metabolism and fuel-utilization to really get going.

Athletes should eat **5-6 times per day**, regardless of whether their goal is weight loss, weight gain, or weight maintenance. Altering body weight comes from changes in food choices and portion sizes, but fueling frequency should not change if top performance is your main priority.

Performance Nutrition Assessment

Nutrition Goals	Always	Most of the Time	Not Enough
DO I?			
Eat breakfast as soon as possible after I wake up			
Start drinking water or other fluids when I wake up to pre-hydrate for the day's workouts			
Plan meals and snacks so I eat every 3–4 hours during the day to properly fuel my body			
Balance my plate at meals with 1/3 protein (meat, fish, beans, cottage cheese, peanut butter) and 2/3 carbohydrates (grains and cereals, bread, pasta, rice, fruits, veggies)			
Eat 1-3 hours before practice to fuel my muscles ahead of time (mostly high-carbohydrate foods; no fried foods before workouts)			
Include "good fats" in my diet that may help with recovery including nuts, seeds, soy nuts, peanut butter, olive oil, and oil-based dressings			
Maximize recovery nutrition after intense workouts by eating or drinking recovery fuel (fluids, carbs, & protein) within 30 minutes of completing exercise			
Eat at least 2 pieces or cups of fruit and 2 cups of vegetables a day to boost natural nutrients			
Eat or drink at least 3 high-calcium sources a day (a glass of milk, a cup of yogurt, a slice of cheese, a glass of calcium-fortified juice)			
Drink fluids all day long + at least 6 ounces for every 20 minutes during hard workouts			
Bring snacks with me during the day so I can stay fueled with energy			
Take a multivitamin daily			
Use additional supplements wisely – making sure they are needed, backed in solid research, and contain no banned substances			
Select alcoholic beverages wisely or not at all			
Prioritize sleep (at least 7–8 hours a night) so my body has a chance to recover and repair on a consistent basis			
Consider my diet as an integral part of my training regimen to help reach my athletic potential			

This handout was designed by Sports Dietitians Michelle Rockwell, MS, RD, CSSD and Susan Kundrat, MS, RD, CSSD to provide general education. For specific concerns, refer to your sports medicine team.