

Nutrition for the Athlete

The Basics

The Athlete's Requirements

- Great Nutrition = Great Performance, increased energy levels
- Poor Nutrition = decreased performance, decreased energy levels

What We NEED

- Athletes have exceptional energy requirements based on activity level, sport demands, and overall personal fitness goals.
- Sometimes we have the notion that what we put in our bodies will have no effect on us when we are young and active...but it does
- For maximum energy benefits, eat a small snack 1-2 hours before activity (game, practice) and within 1 hour after your workout

Essential Nutrients

- **Water:** not sports drinks, soda, or diet soda
 - Sports drinks should be reserved for extremely long, strenuous workouts or if you are trying to increase your weight.
- **Vitamins and minerals:** in the form of fresh fruit, vegetables, lean meats, fish, and poultry, lean dairy products, whole grain cereals, pasta, and bread, and essential fats from vegetable oils, and fish oil or flax oils.

More Essential Nutrients

- **Carbohydrates, Proteins, Fats**
 - All are important for optimum functioning and improved body composition (lean to fat ratio)
 - Extremely low carb or low fat diets are unhealthy and unrealistic
 - Ideally, the athlete would try to eat 4-6 mini-meals per day thereby keeping energy levels constant. Each meals should consist of carbs, protein and “good fats”

Healthy Eating Ideas

- Try to eat 5 servings of fruit and vegetables every day (go easy on fruit juices)
- Have at least 3 servings of whole grain bread, cereal, rice or pasta (look for the word WHOLE before grain)
- Eat 2-3 servings of low-fat milk products (opt for lactose free if you are intolerant or choose rice or soy milk if vegetarian)
- Choose lower fat cuts of meat, poultry, fish if you consume it

Healthy Eating Continued

- Remember other protein sources can be beans, nuts, peanut butter, peas, and seeds
- Decrease the amount of saturated fats you consume (such as fried food) and consume fats that are liquid at room temperature such as olive oil.
- Reduce sugar intake (candy, snacks, etc)

What to Watch Out For: An Eye on Sports Supplements

- Many sports supplements make miraculous claims, however, not enough research supports the short or long term negative effects of sports supplements
- They may not work for you, what works for someone else may have no effect or a negative effect on your health

More on Supplements

- They are not approved by the FDA (food and drug administration) therefore you may not get what the product claims
- They are not necessary. If you have a well-rounded nutrition and training program coupled with the required rest, you will get results
- There are NO MAGIC PILLS or QUICK FIXES, you must be willing to do the work to be successful

For More Information

- Visit the following websites:
 - <http://www.mypyramid.gov/pyramid/index.html>
- *For information on nutrition guidelines

AND/OR

-kidshealth.org

*For information on nutrition, health, exercise, and much more, for students of all ages and parents