

Nutrition for Athletes

HYDRATION: This is the basis of success. Being only 1-2% dehydrated can result in a 15-20% decrease in performance. Hydration is essential to maximize performance potential.

- The better shape you're body is in, the more sweat it will produce during exercise. Sweat allows the body to cool more efficiently.
- To check hydration level, check your first morning urine. It should be the color of lemonade, not apple juice. If it is darker than the color of lemonade, you are not well-hydrated.
- To rehydrate, it is essential to do so slowly. It should take approximately four hours to drink 32 ounces to allow your body time to digest the fluids.
- To check water loss following exercise, check your weight before the workout and then after the workout. Put on dry clothes before weighing. 2 pounds of weight loss is equivalent to 1 quart of water.
- During the day, it is only necessary to drink water. During exercise lasting longer than 30 minutes, sports drinks are recommended. This is to replenish electrolytes (salts) lost in your sweat.
- We can also get a significant amount of water through our diet. 50% of your plate should be fruits and vegetables. Fruits and vegetables are roughly 90% water.
- If you cramp during exercise, it may be a result of dehydration or a loss of sodium in your sweat. If this is the case, you can try adding salt to your meal prior to exercising.



CARBOHYDRATES: This should be approximately 55-65% of your diet.

Endurance athletes need excess carbohydrates. Without sufficient carbohydrates, the body will use lean muscle for energy as a substitute.

- Quality carbohydrates include fruits, vegetables, milk, yogurt, bread, pasta, and rice.
- Carbohydrates with a low glycemic index will provide sustained energy. These include yogurt, bananas, and skim milk.
- Carbohydrates with high glycemic index are best for recovery after exercising. These include potatoes, bagels, and Gatorade.
- Endurance athletes exercising longer than 90 minutes may need to participate in carbohydrate loading.



PROTEIN: This should be 15-25% of your diet. Protein is used as energy when the body does not have enough carbohydrates or fats to utilize. Many athletes get most of their calories from protein sources instead of carbohydrates.

- Quality proteins include peanut butter, chicken, steak, fish, yogurt and baked beans.
- Choose lean meats, low-fat dairy products, and avoid fried foods.
- Small amounts of protein can be consumed 2-4 hours before exercising, but should be consumed in moderation within 30 minutes of exercising to help the recovery process.



FATS: This should be 10-15% of your diet. Some fat in your diet is necessary. Avoid saturated fats when possible.

- Quality fats include trail mix, avocados, and guacamole.
- Animal fats are an unhealthy source of fat.



SNACKS: It is a good idea to have snacks available before exercising.

- Within 2 hours of a game, focus on fluid intake and carbohydrates. Eat a plain sandwich with no added fats (i.e. mayonnaise).
- Quality snacks include dried fruit, mixed nuts, graham crackers, fruit, or a peanut butter sandwich.

