

Facts About

Sports Nutrition and Hydration

Want to be a better athlete—stronger, faster, with more endurance? Then focus on what you're doing off the field, specifically regarding what you eat and drink.

Nutrition and hydration are key for athletic performance. This is your fuel, and without the right fuel, you risk running out of gas. The energy you're taking in before, during and after exercise can have an impact on performance, so be sure to take the time to fuel appropriately.

What's on the Menu?

Carbohydrates: Working muscles need carbohydrates for energy. Carbs are broken down into glucose, which gets absorbed and used for energy. Any glucose not used is stored for later. Not having enough available glucose stores will lead to sluggish workouts—athletes who “hit the wall” or “bonk.” As a result, 40 to 60 percent of your calories should come from carbs.

Carbohydrates come in two types: simple and complex. Athletes need simple carbs for quick energy because they are converted to glucose very rapidly. Healthy examples include whole fruit, fruit juices, milk, yogurt and sports drinks.

The body takes longer to digest and absorb complex carbs. This is good to help keep back-up stores high. Healthy examples of complex carbs include breads, rice and pasta.

Protein: About 30 percent of your calories should come from protein, which helps with muscle recovery and growth. For faster recovery, eat a combination of carbs and protein within 30 minutes of exercise. The American College of Sports Medicine recommends 1.2 to 1.7 grams per day for athletes who require strength and speed, and 1.2 to 1.4 grams per day for endurance athletes.

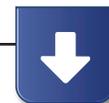
Ideally, protein should come from food, rather than protein bars or powders. The good news is that most people in the United States get more than enough protein in the American diet and don't need to supplement.

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Healthy carbs include:

- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Brown rice
- Oatmeal
- Quinoa
- Whole wheat pasta



Good sources of protein include:

- Grilled chicken breast
- Egg whites
- Fish
- Low-fat dairy
- Almonds
- Yogurt



Healthy Fats: About 20 to 35 percent of your energy intake should come from fat, primarily unsaturated fats, which are considered “healthy fats.” And while too much saturated fat can lead to a wide range of health issues (from obesity to heart disease), your body relies on some level of healthy fats as a long-term energy source.

Calcium and Iron: To build and repair bone, your body requires calcium. Vitamin D helps your body absorb calcium and use it efficiently. This will help prevent stress fractures and low bone mineral density.

Athletes who don’t take in the proper amounts of fuel risk iron depletion, which affects the body’s ability to carry oxygen to working muscle. Vegetarians are especially at risk, in part because the body absorbs meat sources of iron better than plant sources.



 **Healthy fats include:**

- Fish
- Olive oil
- Walnuts
- Leafy green vegetables
- Nuts
- Avocado



 **Hydrate, hydrate, hydrate.**

When you exercise, you sweat, which means your body is quickly losing the fluid and nutrients it needs to function at peak performance. Being as little as two percent dehydrated can affect performance.

Drink water leading up to a game or workout, and make sure to hydrate afterward too. During exercise, make sure you’re drinking every 10 to 15 minutes. Weighing yourself before and after exercise can help you gauge how much fluid you lose with exercise. Replace with about a half a liter of fluid for each pound lost.

If cramping is an issue for you, you may need to incorporate more salt in your diet to help your body retain fluid. Checking the color of your urine is a quick way to determine your hydration status. Aim for clear to light yellow.

Consider a sports drink if you are exercising for more than an hour, if you tend to get muscle cramps, or if you are exercising in extreme heat. These drinks are meant to help your body replenish electrolytes lost with exercise such as sodium, potassium and magnesium.

Pre-Event Planning:

- Eat familiar, low-fat and low-fiber foods that can be easily digested
- Hydrate wisely
- If you can’t tolerate food, try a smoothie or other liquid meal replacement

Post-Event Recovery

- Consume snack or meal with protein and carbohydrate within 30 minutes
- Rehydrate and replace lost electrolytes
- Chocolate milk is an excellent choice

With proper food and hydration as fuel, your body—and your teammates—will thank you.



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