

# Healthy Food Tips for Athletes

**Frequent meals and snacks throughout the day will fuel your body and allow you to perform at your best:**

- ✓ 3 meals with at least 2-3 snacks per day
- ✓ Eat meal/snack every 3-4 hours (don't go longer than 5 hours without eating!)
  - Make sure to include good carbs and lean protein sources at each meal & snack

## Carbohydrate Sources:

**Look for at least 3 grams of fiber per serving\***

- \*Whole grain breads and cereals, cooked grains, pasta, legumes
  - oatmeal, brown rice, whole-wheat spaghetti, barley, beans, lentils, bagels, popcorn, etc...
- High amounts of fruits & vegetables
  - whole fruits/veggies, fruit smoothies, soups, salads, etc...
  - Starchy vegetables (potatoes, corn, peas, yams, pumpkin, squash) have more CHO per serving

## Protein Sources

- Lean cuts of meat, fish, poultry (i.e. chicken breast, tuna) → remove skin & visible fat
- Low-fat dairy products (Greek yogurt, nonfat or 1% milk, mozzarella cheese, cottage cheese, etc.)
- Eggs (limit yolks and add extra egg whites)
- Nuts and peanut butter (almonds/walnuts/peanuts: 1 serving = 10-12 nuts; 1 Tbsp. PB)
- Beans and lentils (black, lima, and pinto - low-fat or non-fat refried beans)
- Vegetarian protein sources (i.e. tofu, soy milk, almond milk, Gardenburgers®, Boca Burgers®, etc.)

## Other Tips

- **Don't skip breakfast!** Your energy stores will be depleted much faster!
- Use small amounts of dressings & sauces whenever possible (limit white/creamy sauces & salad dressings)
- Best cooking methods: grill, steam, bake, roast
- Be selective about fast food restaurants: LIMIT fried foods
  - All fast-food restaurants offer healthier options, such as:
    - Subway subs "7 under 6" (7 subs with 6 grams of fat or less)
    - McDonalds salads with dressings *on the side*; hamburger with fruit
    - Rubio's HealthMex Burritos, Tacos, or Salads
  - Starbucks: Lite options (non-fat milk, no whipped cream, etc.), iced or hot coffee, latte's or misto's

## Snack Ideas

- Greek yogurt + banana or other fruit
- Apple or banana + peanut butter or string cheese
- Pineapple + cottage cheese
- Half bagel + peanut butter
- Pretzels + string cheese, PB, hummus
- Cup of cereal + skim or 1% milk
- Dried cereal with nuts & dried fruit (*homemade trail mix*)
- 8 oz. fruit smoothie with protein powder (i.e. 8 oz. Naked Juice High Protein Drink)
- Sports bar or granola bar

## Pre-Game Snack Ideas (1 to 2 hours prior to practice/competition/activity)

- 1 piece of fresh fruit with graham crackers
- Dried fruit and a small yogurt
  - *Limit Greek yogurt immediately prior to activity; choose regular yogurt which has less protein*
- A fruit and cereal bar and a small glass of fruit juice
- A muffin and a small carton of low-fat milk

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## **Pre-Game Meal Ideas** (2 to 3 hours prior to practice/competition)

### **Breakfast**

- Mini bagel with banana or honey and peanut butter
- Greek yogurt with ¼ cup blueberries and 2 Tbsp. walnuts or almonds (around 6-10)
- Almonds and dates (or other dried fruit and nuts)
- Oatmeal topped with Greek yogurt or nut butter
- Blueberry smoothie (mix 175 ml (3/4 cup) of vanilla yogurt + 125 ml (1/2 cup) of milk + handful of blueberries together in a blender); raisin toast with a bit of butter or margarine
- 2 cups cereal with nonfat or 1% milk, 1 banana

### **Lunch or Dinner**

- Tuna in a pita; vegetable juice; 1 small banana
- Grilled chicken breast or fish with pasta, vegetables, and tomato sauce
- Veggie burger on bun with lettuce, tomato, onion, avocado, ketchup, mustard
- Vegetable soup; a few melba toasts with cottage cheese; an apple and a few graham crackers

## **Pre-Game Meal Ideas** (3-4 hours prior to practice/competition/activity)

***Guidelines for pre-game meal: 200-300g carbohydrate, moderate in protein, low in fat and fiber***

### **Examples**

- Peanut butter & jelly sandwich with 8 ounces of chocolate milk
- Egg white omelet with veggies, 1 pc. whole grain toast, fruit
- 1 bagel with 2 Tbsp. peanut butter, 1.5 cups orange juice
- Homemade quesadilla (2 tortillas, chicken or low fat refried beans, cheese) – bake at 350\* until cheese is melted; top with tomatoes, onions, salsa, and ¼ avocado
- 12' Turkey Sub w/ veggie toppings (or 4 cups spaghetti w/ sauce instead of sandwich if need 300g carbohydrate)
- 1 oz. pretzels, 2 Tbsp. hummus, 1 orange

## **POST-Game Snack Ideas** (within 60 minutes after competition and every 2 hours until meal)

***Guidelines for post-game snacks: 100-150 g carbohydrate & 7-11 g protein***

### **Examples:**

- Turkey sandwich & 8 ounces of chocolate milk
- Turkey-Veggie wrap with water
- Cottage Cheese and slivered almonds
- Edamame and Quinoa Salad
- Brown Rice and Beans
- Apple and walnuts or peanut butter
- Pasta salad with chicken
- Whole grain crackers and low fat cheese
- High protein cereal and lowfat milk
- Sports Bar & 1 cup juice
- 1 cup yogurt, banana, 1 cup juice

## **Hydration Before, During & After the Game**

- Increase fluids 24 hours before competition (water is best).
- Drink at least 2 cups of water ~2 hours **prior** to competition.
- Consume ½ cup water every 15 minutes **during** the event.
- Events ≥90 min: Use sports drink to replace fluids, carbohydrates, and electrolytes to delay fatigue.
- **After** the event, drink 2 cups water/sports drink for every pound of weight lost during the event.

## **How do I do it?**

What you eat *before training* depends upon what your body can handle and break down during the activity you're going to do and at what intensity.

***It's important to remember what you had the day before too!***

*...ask yourself "What did I have for dinner last night?"*

*"Were there large gaps of time between meals & snacks?"*

...

Make sure you have a good source of carbohydrates and at least 300 calories before an endurance workout. That meal should contain some carbohydrates and protein and have a lesser amount of fat. Make sure to eat 1-3 hours prior to exercise, depending upon how well you tolerate fueling up prior to exercise. Practice with various calorie levels, foods, and timing to see what works best to "dial in" your pre-workout and pre-game meal options.

### **practice, practice, practice!**

Try scheduling in at least one "nutrition focused" workout per week. Just as you would focus on drills or speed or endurance, this workout is focused on your nutrition.

Your nutrition workout helps you figure out what works and what doesn't. How many calories you can tolerate, liquids versus solids, and what makes you feel energetic and fast as opposed to lethargic and slow.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Focus on whole foods as much as possible!
- Use sports nutrition products (drinks, bars, gels, blocks, etc) for their convenience factor but don't rely on them for daily nutrition – OR meal replacements!
- Combine complex carbohydrate ( $\geq 3\text{g}/\text{fiber}/\text{svg}$ ) and protein whenever possible to maintain blood sugar levels and keep that metabolism running.
- Maintain good hydration levels throughout training.
- No food (hydrate only) is necessary during training unless you are working out longer than 75-90 minutes.
- Limit or avoid artificial sweeteners and sugar substitutes (Stevia<sup>®</sup>, NutraSweet, Aspartame, Splenda<sup>®</sup>, Equal<sup>®</sup>, Sweetn' Low<sup>®</sup>, Sunett<sup>®</sup>, Acesulfame K, Maltitol)
  - You'll find these in "Diet" and "Low Carb" foods, as well as sugar free gum
- Large amounts of protein ( $>30\text{g}$ ) per meal may not be utilized properly. Balance your protein intake throughout the day.
  - Large amounts of protein do not equate to larger muscles. A well-balanced intake, including complex carbohydrates and lean fat sources, along with protein and exercise help your body to become stronger, leaner, and healthier!

**Learn proper timing of food intake for your own body – everyone is different!**

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