

Performance Playbook



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Fueling Athletes

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The hours that athletes spend in practices, training, and competing place large demands on the physical conditioning of players. The peak energy level and power needed to compete in any sport can be maximized with a balanced whole-foods diet focused on high-quality protein, healthy fats, and whole-grain carbohydrates.

To fuel power workouts, enhance stamina, energy, strength, and quickness, athletes need to eat and drink the proper foods. Use these recommendations to assist the athletes in reaching their goals:

Eat adequate dietary carbohydrates daily to fuel training and competition.

Many athletes need help identifying foods that contain carbohydrates. They may know that white pasta is a good source of carbohydrates, but they are not aware that whole-grain pasta, cereals and breads, fruits, vegetables, dried peas and beans, brown rice, and potatoes (especially sweet) also contain carbohydrates and are more nutrient-rich choices.

Choose mostly unprocessed carbs, when possible.

Some athletes rely heavily on highly processed foods with refined ingredients rather than whole grains (e.g., white bagels, french fries, white pasta, white sugar). Whole-grain minimally processed bagels, breads, muffins, and cereals contain more nutrients. Choose those that do not contain hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils (trans fats). Add ground flax to any homemade whole-grain items to add even more balanced power fuel.

Choose high-quality protein.

- While protein is not a primary fuel for working muscles, it is the main component of muscles, organs, enzymes, and oxygen-carrying hemoglobin. Amino acids are the building blocks of protein. High-quality protein foods contain all the essential amino acids needed to build and repair body tissues.
- Athletes should consume a wide variety of high-quality lean protein foods, such as chicken, turkey,

beef, lamb, pork, soy, eggs (omega-3 fortified), legumes (beans), milk, and nuts.

Choose healthy and healing fats.

- Fat is needed in the diet – the right type of fat is key. Aside from being a concentrated source of dietary energy, fats form essential tissue-building blocks and hormone-regulating substances.
- Athletes should incorporate a variety of natural fats into their daily diet, such as nuts, seeds, cold water fish, olives, and avocados.

INSTEAD OF THIS ...	TRY THIS ...
Donut or sweet roll	Whole-grain bagel with nut butter and ground flax
Chips and dip for a snack	Tuna fish salad on mini whole-grain rice crackers with romaine
Sugar cereal with 2% milk and a fruit bar	Whole-grain cereal with omega-3 fortified milk and berries.
Hamburger on a white bun	Salmon, turkey, beef or veggie burger on a whole-grain roll with fresh spinach and onion
Cake or cookies	Fresh fruit dipped in natural almond butter
Sausage or pepperoni pizza	Hot turkey or other minimally processed meat sandwich with peppers on whole-grain pita with a colorful salad and vinaigrette

Nutrition practices can have a significant impact on the overall development of an athlete. The proper fuel can help athletes reach their potential.