

First-Class Fuels

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The hours 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 diet focused on whole-grain carbohydrates, high-quality protein and healthy fats.

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 athlete 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 pasta is a good source of carbohydrates, but they are not aware that fruits, vegetables, dried peas and beans, whole-grain cereals, breads and potatoes also contain carbohydrates.

Choose mostly whole-grain carbs, when possible

Some athletes rely heavily on highly processed foods with refined ingredients rather than whole-grains. Whole-grain bagels, breads, muffins and cereals contain more nutrients and less unhealthy fats than highly processed products.

Choose high-quality protein

- ✓ While protein is not a primary fuel for working muscles, it is a 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 protein foods, such as chicken, turkey, beef, pork, soybeans, milk, eggs, legumes (beans) and nuts.
- ✓ Fat is needed in the diet. 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, nut butters, oils and seeds, cold water fish, olives and avocados. Large amounts of saturated fat (from animal products, such as dairy and meat), and "trans" fats (from hydrogenated and partially hydrogenated oils in many packaged products) should be avoided.

INSTEAD OF THIS...	TRY THIS...
Donut or sweet roll	Whole-grain bagel with nut butter
Chips and dip for a snack	Albacore tuna on whole wheat bread
Sugar cereal with 2% milk and a fruit bar	Whole-grain cereal with non-fat milk or soy milk, handful of nuts, and a piece of fresh fruit
Hamburger on a white bun	Salmon, turkey or veggie burger on a whole-grain roll with lettuce and tomato
Cake or cookies	Fresh fruit dipped in natural peanut butter
Sausage or pepperoni pizza	Vegetable pizza and garden salad

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