Athlete Eating Guidelines

Focus on the following nutrition principles year-round:

Stay hydrated. Your body is more than 60% water and your muscles depend on water to function properly. A dehydrated body cannot train or compete at its peak. Drink enough so that your urine looks like pale lemonade or apple juice and so that you are urinating frequently throughout the day.

Fuel up before training. Focus on eating lean proteins, fruits and vegetables and whole grains to ensure that your body is prepared for training. Try not to go into a training session with an empty fuel tank. Eat a meal 3-4 hours or a snack 1-2 hours before exercise.

Boost your immune system. Choose foods that are high in antioxidants such as fruits and vegetables to help keep your immune system healthy and reduce the amount of free radicals that your body builds up during high intensity training. Choose more colorful fruits and vegetables such as blueberries, strawberries, kiwis, oranges, broccoli, carrots and sweet potatoes.

Limit fats. Saturated and trans fats can cause inflammation which is the exact opposite of what elite athletes need. Stay away from foods that are processed or fried, and higher fat meats like chicken wings, bologna and pastrami. Choose non-inflammatory unsaturated fats such as olives, avocados, nuts, seeds, and salmon.

Eat to recover. Choose carbohydrate rich foods with some protein within 30-60 minutes of finishing a training session to help your body recover faster. Good choices after workouts include: peanut butter sandwich (half or whole), carton of chocolate milk, or a bowl of cereal with milk or yogurt.

Sport products. Sports bars, gels and drinks do have their place in an elite athlete's eating program. Be sure to not over-use these types of products, however, as they can deter body weight goals and can replace more beneficial calories from whole foods. Use sports products before, during or immediately after practice depending on your sport needs and goals.

INFORMATION

A proper eating program is just as important to an elite athlete's success as a training program.

Think of your body as a car...

The foods and drinks you consume are the fuel. Elite athletes are like finely tuned cars that require high quality fuel to achieve optimal performance. Putting low quality fuel into your body can lead to poor health and sub-par performance.

This material was developed by professional sports nutritionists at the United States Olympic Committee. For more information and additional sport performance resources, visit:

www.teamusa.org/resources/usoc-sport-performance

BASIC STRATEGIES FOR ATHLETES

Consume enough calories to support your training needs. When you don't eat enough, your body responds by increasing stress hormone levels that have direct connections to lowered immune function.

Show up for training adequately fueled. Carbohydrates are critical for fueling immune cells. The most effective strategy for athletes to maintain immune function is to consume carbohydrates during exercise. Protein is also needed to synthesize key immune factors and to build and repair body tissues.

Maintain hydration. A dry mouth decreases the mouth's natural functions as a first-line immunological barrier. This means more susceptibility of the body to bacteria and viruses. Dehydration can also cause an increased production of the stress hormone cortisol, which is linked to immunosuppression.

Recovery nutrition. To lessen the effects a high-intensity or long-duration (longer than 90 minutes) training session has on immune function, consume a high carbohydrate snack or meal within 15 to 60 minutes after training, and a high carbohydrate snack again at three and six hours post-training.

Keep your gut happy and healthy. Seventy percent of your immune function arises from the healthy bacteria of your gut. A healthy gut is the result of a balanced diet, including consuming pre- and probiotic foods.

Micronutrients and antioxidants. Iron, Zinc, Vitamin D, Vitamins A, E and C, and phytochemicals including beta-carotene, play important roles in immune function. Use the table below to identify foods rich in these nutrients and include them regularly in your diet.

IMMUNE-BOOSTING MEALS

- Chicken and vegetable stir fry with rice
- Bean, rice and chicken burrito with salsa and cheese
- Black bean soup or low-fat chili with salad, whole-wheat crackers and fruit
- Fruit, yogurt and granola breakfast bowls
- Tuna sandwich on whole-wheat bread with carrots and fruit
- Pasta with lean ground beef and tomato sauce, and a vegetable salad

The role of diet in promoting a strong immune system begins before you get sick. Promoting a strong immune function through consuming a consistent, high-quality diet will make fighting off illness faster and easier.

Omega 3s	Antioxidants	Zinc	Iron	Vitamin D
Cold-water fish (salmon, sardines, fresh tuna, halibut), walnuts, flax seed, soybean and canola oils, brussel sprouts, kale, spinach	Oranges, cantaloupe, papaya, apples, berries, sweet potato, broccoli, carrots, spinach, kale, bell peppers, asparagus, onions, garlic, beets, red/yellow spices	Legumes (beans), 100 percent whole wheat, beef, pork, chicken, spinach, oysters, yogurt, pumpkin seeds, cashews, dark chocolate, mushrooms, fortified cereals	Red meat, dark-green leafy vegetables (spinach, collard greens), fortified cereals, slow-cooked beans, artichokes, black strap molasses, tofu, quinoa, prunes	Sunlight, fortified dairy and soy foods, salmon, tuna, mackerel, fortified foods (orange juice, cereals). Smaller amounts in beef and egg yolks

STILL GOT SICK?

Stick to the basics: rest, hydrate, eat smart and then rest some more. High-intensity training while you're sick can extend the duration of your cold and possibly increase its severity. You aren't achieving any benefits from training while you're sick and you risk spreading the infection to your teammates.

PUTTING IT INTO ACTION

Along with the basics, consider the following recommendations to help you stay healthy. Refer to the fact sheets covering nutrition before, during and after activity to help you maintain a healthy diet.

	Caloric Intake	Hydration	Before, during and recovery nutrition	Healthy Gut
Supporting a Healthy Immune System	Don't skip meals. Eat a well-balanced diet that includes carbohydrate, fiber, protein and healthy fats.	Drink water, choose non-caffeinated low-sugar drinks during the day.	Consume carbohydrate and fluids before, during and within an hour after training.	Consume adequate fluids and fuel during practice.
While Sick	Even if you're not hungry, eat small amounts throughout your day. Avoid sugary and high-fat foods.	Consume lots of fluids. Consider high water-containing foods such as soups/broth, yogurts and applesauce.	Steer clear of practice. Rest.	Consume yogurt with live active cultures, whole fruits, vegetables, and other fiber-rich foods.

Written by SCAN Registered Dietitians (RDs). For more information consult a RD who specializes in sports, particularly a Board-Certified Specialist in Sports Dietetics (CSSD). Find a SCAN RD at www.scandpg.org.

The key to optimal meal planning is developing a plan to meet the demands of your busy schedule and your body composition goals. There are lots of ways to strategize about eating frequently. A registered dietitian (RD) or Certified Specialist in Sports Dietetics (CSSD) is the food and nutrition professional best qualified to help you design a nutrition plan tailored to your health and performance needs. Check with your athletics department or student health services or go to scandpg.org and click on Find a SCAN RD.

START YOUR DAY OFF RIGHT

- Get a quick carbohydrate boost before the morning training session and eat a balanced breakfast that combines fiber (whole grains) and protein for sustainable energy before class.
- Select meals that are carbohydrate-rich, moderate in protein, and low in fat.
- **Breakfast:** choose eggs, whole grain toast with peanut butter, cereal and milk, fruit or 100% fruit juice, whole grain waffles topped with fruit, or yogurt
- Make lunch count by choosing lean meats to help you recover from a morning session and complex carbohydrates to replenish your body for an afternoon workout.
- ***Nutrient-rich lunch options:*** *pasta with chicken and* tomato sauce, steamed rice with vegetables and low-fat milk, grilled chicken sandwich with a fruit and yogurt smoothie, instant oatmeal with dried fruit and low-fat milk, a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, chicken noodle soup with crackers, chicken or turkey wrap, or sliced turkey on a bagel.

KEEP ENERGY UP DURING TRAINING

- If your training will be longer than an hour, plan a small carbohydrate-rich snack or beverage immediately before and during the activity.
- A sports drink during training or intense physical activity provides fuel and replaces lost fluid and electrolytes.
- **Nutrition during training:** granola or sports bars, bananas, dried fruit, and bread with jam or jelly.
- Drink water when consuming carbohydrates during practice to avoid stomach problems.

FUEL YOUR DAY

- Plan to have healthful food available to consume every two to three hours. This will provide enough physical and mental fuel to sustain intense training on the field of play and in the classroom.
- **Smart snacks:** string cheese, low-fat yogurt, dry cereal, trail mix, whole grain crackers, 100% fruit juice, dried fruit snacks and granola or breakfast bars.
- Establish a routine eating pattern for every day of the week. Athletes with a consistent fueling pattern tend to be leaner and have more energy.
- Some athletes prefer carbohydrate-rich fluids instead of whole foods to avoid feeling full.

REPLENISH YOUR BODY DURING RECOVERY

- Plan to have a meal within one hour after training. A meal of carbohydrate-rich foods, high-quality protein, and ample fluids will meet your recovery needs.
- A recovery snack, eaten within 30 minutes, is critical if you don't eat a meal within one hour after training. This is especially important on days with multiple training, competition or tournament sessions.
- **Recovery nutrition:** Low-fat chocolate milk, trail mix, cereal and milk, yogurt parfaits and fruit smoothies.
- Student-athletes do not always have access to food immediately after practice. Be sure to pack recovery snacks in your gym bag so that you can quickly begin to refuel.

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