

9 NUTRITION TIPS TO IMPROVE ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE

Proper nutrition is vital to an athlete's preparation, performance, and recovery. Follow these 10 recommendations to achieve the following:

- Faster recovery between workouts
- Better performance during and after competition
- More consistent and higher energy levels
- Increased immunity



1. **Energy-Up:** Within 45 minutes of a workout, eat a easily digestible snack to feed your brain so your stored energy can go directly to fuel your muscles. Granola bar, fruit, slice of bread and peanut butter...you decide. Just be sure it isn't something that will cause GI distress during your workout.



2. **Replenish stored energy, electrolytes and water quickly after a strenuous workout:** Within 45 minutes after your workout,

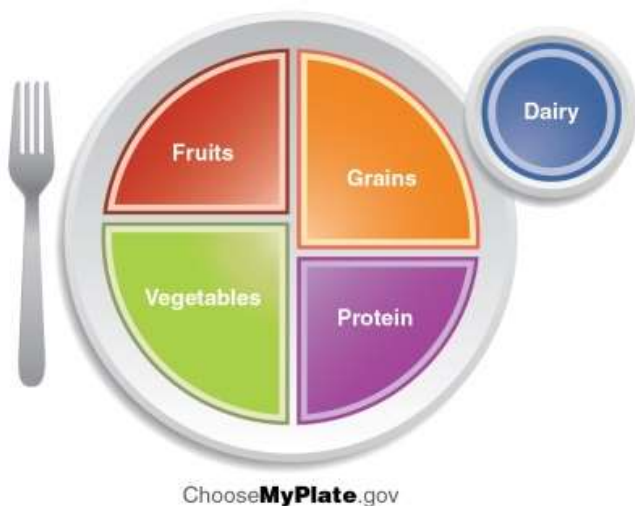
- Hydrate with water every 15-20 minutes. If you have exercised strenuously and continuously for 60 minutes, include a sports drink to replenish your lost electrolytes (sodium and potassium).
- After a workout, your stored energy (glycogen) is depleted and this is an excellent time to replenish it with fast-digesting carbohydrates with a small amount of protein (3:1). Recommended options are a granola bar, fruit with peanut butter, peanut butter and jelly sandwich, or chocolate milk.

3. **Don't go hungry:** Physical hunger is the body's way of telling you it needs fuel so honor it, especially if you want it to perform at its best. Carry nutrient rich snacks with you at all times and check in with your physical hunger every 3-4hours to see if you need to eat. Never skip meals because this deprives your body of nutrition that maintains your muscle mass and energy needs.
4. **Don't skip breakfast and don't eat all of your calories in one meal:** Breakfast IS the most important meal of the day, should never be skipped, and should include complex carbohydrates, protein, and fruit. Eating more of your calories earlier in the day helps to properly fuel your workouts, wards off late night food cravings, and improves academic performance.

Skipping breakfast can lead to reduced time to fatigue, increased rate of perceived exertion, difficulty concentrating, and increased body composition over time – all states negatively impacting performance.

Recommended intake for most individuals is 3 meals, 2-3 snacks per day as needed. As an athlete, checking in with your physical hunger/fullness cues every 4-5hrs is a good idea to ensure you are maintaining a consistent energy level at all times.





5. **Vegetables should fill ½ your plate and fruit at each meal (lunch and dinner);** Not only do fruits and vegetables contain essential vitamins and minerals allowing your body to function properly, they contain antioxidants that reduce inflammation, boost your immune system, contribute to hydration status, and lessen time of recovery between workouts.

6. **Carry snacks:** Don't get caught without any healthy food options while on campus. Carry snacks with you that won't go bad such as trail mix, jerky, nuts, fruit, granola bars, or peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. If you carry an insulated lunch bag, try low-fat yogurt, 2% low-fat chocolate milk, string cheese and crackers, hummus and carrots, or a turkey sandwich.
7. **Plan ahead;** Spend some down time planning your meals and snacks for the week so you don't eat whatever is easiest. Keep a grocery list of items needed on your phone so nothing is forgotten at the grocery store. This will save you time, money, and keep your performance at its highest level
8. **Hydration! Hydration! Hydration!** Dehydration can lead to decreases in performance, increased core temperature, increased perceived rate of exertion, and/or muscle cramps and headaches. Hydrate all day, during and after a workout. Replenish each pound lost during exercise with 20-24oz of water immediately after completion. If activity lasts longer than 60 minutes, sports drinks into hydration plan.



9. **Ask for help from a Registered Dietitian!**
Registered Dietitians are professionally trained to assist people with achieving their best selves through nutrition. **Make an appointment with a Clinician at USC Engemann Student Health Center for a Dietitian referral at usc.edu/myshr or on (213) 740-9355.**

We look forward to working with you!