



*...d are not magic pills, but the virtues sports are meant to instill: discipline, training, sound nutrition, fitness, skills, unwork, valor, and winning and losing with class.” Dr. E. Randy Eichner, Team Internist, University of Oklahoma*

### **Eating- Practice Every Day!**

*To reach your highest potential, all of your body systems must be perfectly tuned. Nothing is more important to your well-being and ability to perform than good nutrition. Eating the right foods helps you maintain desirable body weight, stay physically fit, and establish optimum nerve-muscle reflexes. Without the right foods, even physical conditioning and expert coaching aren't enough to push you to your best. Good nutrition must be a key part of your training program if you are to succeed. Keeping your energy levels up for peak performance isn't easy. It doesn't just happen. High energy levels are the result of good eating and exercise habits. If you don't pay attention to either of these factors, your performance can suffer. The training period offers you an excellent opportunity to establish sound eating practices that will benefit you on the playing field as well as give you a measure of well-being throughout life.*

*One of the least-recognized nutrition problems of the young athlete is simply not eating enough. Extracurricular activities may make life so busy that you simply don't take the time to eat. After-school practice sessions may be so exhausting that you feel too tired to eat. But you must take the time to eat the right foods. Don't let fourth-quarter fatigue caused by poor eating hurt your performance.*

*Another problem of the young athlete is not eating the right kinds of foods--particularly foods high in starch. Eating a balanced diet that has plenty of starch keeps muscle energy up. Many young athletes eat more foods high in protein instead, and that's a mistake. A normal diet contains enough protein to support the added muscle growth and development of a young athlete.*

### **Look for Extra Food Energy**

*Teenage athletes burn up more calories than non-athletic teens. You can fill this requirement by eating more food from all food groups. Carbohydrates are the most efficient fuel for your body during strenuous exercise. Get most of your extra energy from foods like starchy vegetables and whole grain or enriched bread, cereal, rice, or pasta instead of from fatty foods. For example, on an athlete's plate, a baked potato should get the nod over French fries. Because of their rapid growth and development and higher levels of physical activity, many teen athletes should eat the higher levels of servings recommended from each food group--especially from the bread, cereal, rice, and pasta group and the vegetable group. A 180-pound tight end could easily eat eleven servings of breads/ cereals and five servings of vegetables daily. This athlete may even need more than the maximum servings recommended. Eating the maximum number of servings recommended from all five food groups provides about 3,000 calories. That's why large male athletes involved in a vigorous sport like football or soccer will have to eat more than the upper end of the recommended serving levels.*

### **Eat Regularly**

*Breakfast is especially important because you need food to start the day. Your body begins the day in a low-energy, fasted condition. Teens who eat breakfast score higher on physical fitness tests. Breakfasts can be made up of any combination of nutritious foods that you enjoy eating. Spaghetti and meatballs, together with an orange and a glass of milk, is a nutritionally sound meal for any time of the day-even breakfast!*

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**What should the athlete eat before a game?**

Before a game, your digestive processes may be slowed down by your keyed-up emotional state. To allow for this condition, you should eat an easily digestible meal no later than three hours before the contest. Avoid foods that contain substantial amounts of fats or oils. Fats are more slowly digested than other nutrients. Trying to participate with a high-fat meal still in your stomach is a losing proposition. Meals high in starches are better because they are digested more rapidly than fats or oils.

Some athletes like poached eggs, toast, and juice as a light pregame meal. Some prefer breakfast cereal with low-fat milk, toast with just a little jelly, and juice.

**Foods for Fuel- Samples of High Carbohydrate, Low-Fat Meals**

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snacks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*whole grain waffles w/ syrup</li> <li>*handful of walnuts</li> <li>*Lowfat milk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*bean burrito</li> <li>*baked chips and salsa</li> <li>*100% fruit juice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Spaghetti with tomato sauce &amp; sliced vegetables</li> <li>*Spinach salad</li> <li>* Lowfat Milk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Whole grain bagel with peanut butter</li> <li>*Grapes</li> <li>*Yogurt</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Granola cereal with banana</li> <li>*whole wheat toast</li> <li>*Orange juice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Grilled chicken sandwich</li> <li>*Baked potato with veggies</li> <li>*Fruit Cup</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Vegetarian Pizza</li> <li>*Tossed Green Salad w/ whole grain roll</li> <li>*Apple Crisp</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Raisins</li> <li>*Sliced turkey on whole grain crackers</li> <li>*Gatorade</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Oatmeal and Sliced Fruit</li> <li>*Lowfat Milk</li> <li>*Canadian Bacon</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Turkey Sub on whole grain bread</li> <li>*Baked chips</li> <li>*Apple</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Chili with beans and rice</li> <li>*100% fruit juice</li> <li>*Mixed berries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Popcorn</li> <li>*Peanuts</li> <li>*Iced Tea</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Whole grain English muffin with peanut butter</li> <li>*Juice or Water</li> <li>*Banana</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Rice with vegetables and black beans</li> <li>*Garden Veggie Salad with grilled chicken</li> <li>*Fruit Cup</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Grilled Fish filet</li> <li>*Large green salad with vinaigrette</li> <li>*Steamed veggies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Cottage Cheese</li> <li>*Fruit Smoothie</li> <li>*Lowfat Frozen Yogurt</li> </ul>
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Make sure your pre-game meal plans follow these guidelines:

- Allow enough time for digestion. Eat the meal at least three hours before an event.
- Choose a meal that's high in starch. Starch is easy to digest and helps steady the levels of blood sugar.
- Consume only moderate amounts of protein. Protein foods take longer to digest than starch. And high-protein meals may lead to increased urine production, which can add to dehydration.
- Limit fats and oils. They take too long to digest.
- Restrict sugary foods. Sweets can cause rapid energy swings in blood sugar levels and result in low blood sugar and less energy.
- Avoid foods and drinks that contain caffeine. Caffeine stimulates the body to increase urine output, which can contribute to dehydration problems. [Click here to learn more about proper hydration.](#)

Other Links for Nutrition:

[Gatorade Sports Science Institute](#)- For scientific and practical information on sports nutrition and athletic performance.

[American Dietetic Association](#)- Locate a local registered dietitian by specialty.

[Sport Fuel](#)- Click on this site for more sample athlete meals, recipes, and a nutrition game-ready checklist.