

Healthy Eating Habits for Athletes *by Nanci S. Guest MSc , Sport Nutritionist*

1.	Drink plenty of water! Water is the best beverage, closely followed by milk. Water regulates the body temperature and carries nutrients and waste products throughout the body. For training more than 1 hour however, try a commercial sports drink (or a homemade sports drink: "diluted orange or cranberry juice": ½ cup juice per 1.5 cups water, & a pinch of salt) to provide fluid and fuel to muscles, and will prevent use of protein as a fuel source.
2.	Eat breakfast! Carbohydrates fuel exercise. Eat a muffin, bagel or toast & peanut butter, cereal, pancakes, waffles, or French toast. Add an egg or glass of milk for some protein, & add a banana or orange juice for a good potassium source.
3.	Calcium, found in milk, soy milk, yogurt, cheeses, cottage cheese, tofu, and green leafy vegetables, such as broccoli, collard greens, and kale is needed for strong bones and may protect against muscle cramps. Calcium strengthens bone density. Select 3 to 4 servings per day of calcium rich low-fat dairy products & 1-2 servings of green leafy vegetables.
4.	Carbohydrates are the fuel source for muscles and the brain, and they spare muscle protein. These are the primary energy sources for all types of exercise. 55-65% (6-10 g/kg bodyweight) of calories should come from carbohydrates: breads, grains, cereals, potatoes, rice, beans, pasta, fruit & vegetables. Select 9-12+ servings of carbohydrate foods per day. At least one third of the plate should be covered with carbohydrate foods (fruits, veggies & grain products).
5.	Eat fruits and vegetables for fiber, potassium, and vitamins C & A, and lots of antioxidants. Green & black teas also have lots of antioxidant power. Select 3-5 servings of vegetables (at least 1 green and leafy), and 3-5 servings of fruits (at least 1 a citrus fruit) DAILY. Optimal health means optimal sport performance!
6.	Meat, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, tofu, dairy products and nuts are protein sources needed for muscle development & repair, sources of B vitamins, and iron. 2-3 servings are needed per day. 12-15% (1.2-1.6 g/kg bodyweight) of the day's total calories should come from protein sources. Try to eat small amounts of protein often throughout the day, as it is not stored in the body.
7.	Fats and oils should be used sparingly. 25% of the day's total calories should come from fat. Good fats include nuts, seeds, olive oil & a variety of fish (ie salmon) Excess fats are stored as fat and are not available during exercise, but during low levels of activity they are used for fuel. Limit the unhealthy fats found in whole fat dairy products (choose low fat varieties), fried foods, meat, poultry, hot dogs, fast food burgers & snack foods (chips, cookies, pastries, muffins, doughnuts, ice-cream, milkshakes)
8.	Snacks can be healthy. Select bagels, low fat muffins, cereal, fruit leather, energy bars, yogurt, bananas, apples, oranges, peanut butter and crackers, popcorn, raisins, carrots, & some unsalted nuts (almonds, pistachios, cashews, walnuts, peanuts). Snacks supply additional protein for muscle development, and carbohydrates for muscle fuel & maintenance of blood sugar levels. Plan ahead so you always have snacks available before & after training (keep trail mix, energy bars, raisins, apples & bananas in your school bag, gym bag or car).