

# Sports Nutrition: Eating for Peak Performance

## *The Carbohydrate, Protein, and Fat Game Plan*

### **The Fuel Plan**

Successful athletic ability comes from good genetics and endless training. However, poor food choices and mediocre nutrition will cause your training and performance to suffer. A successful athlete knows how to fuel the body with the right balance of carbohydrates, protein, and fat.

### **Carbohydrates: The foundation of the sports diet**

Carbohydrates are the main source of energy for high-intensity events lasting less than 60 seconds and for high intensity aerobic events lasting longer than 1 hour. Carbohydrates are the fuel that affects your stamina and endurance. They are stored in limited amounts in:

- Muscles, in the form of glycogen. When muscles run low on glycogen, you may experience “hitting the wall”. Glycogen stores can become depleted during two to three hours of moderate aerobic activity or 15 to 30 minutes of high intensity exercise.
- Liver, as a “savings account” of sugar that feeds into the blood to help maintain a normal blood glucose levels. When your liver runs out of glycogen your nervous system may shut down. This is commonly referred to as “bonking”.

The American College of Sports Medicine recommends 55-65% of our daily calorie intake come from carbohydrates. You should choose from grain-based foods, vegetables, and fruits. Here are some suggestions:

- ✓ whole wheat pastas, breads, bagels, tortillas, waffles
- ✓ brown rice, barley, lentils, beans, couscous, pretzels
- ✓ air-popped popcorn, baked chips, hot or cold cereals
- ✓ sweet potatoes, yams, starchy vegetables, dense fruits

### *Protein: For muscle growth and repair*

Protein is necessary for muscle growth and to repair muscle damage after exercise. It is also needed to make red blood cells, which move oxygen to muscles, and white blood cells, which fight infections. Protein helps regulate metabolism by making hormones and enzymes.

You can calculate your protein needs by multiplying your weight in pounds by 0.5-0.75 grams of protein per pound.

*Example: 130 pounds x 0.5 to 0.75 gm= 65-98 grams/day.*

Foods highest in protein include:

- ✓ lean meats, fish, poultry, eggs
- ✓ beans, nuts, vegetarian proteins
- ✓ skim milk, cheese, yogurt

### *Fats: For flavor and satiety*

Fat is used for energy. It also helps to move substances in and out of cells and helps to keep your brain and nervous system healthy. Not all fats are created equal. Saturated fats and trans fats are the “bad” fats and polyunsaturated/monounsaturated fats are the “good” fats.

The American Heart Association recommends 25-35% of daily calories come from fat. The target sports diet is recommended at 25%. Choose fats that have a positive health value such as all-natural peanut or almond butter, olive oil, low fat dairy products, salmon, and other oily fish.

As an athlete, you want to include a little fat in each meal to not only help absorb fat soluble vitamins but also to enhance performance. In studies, runners who boosted their intake of healthful fat from 17% of calories to 30% of calories were not only able to run longer but also had less inflammation afterwards.

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To learn more about your nutritional needs and questions, purchase a 30 minute phone consultation with Alison from **GetFitLiveFit.org**.