

The Basics

Fuel Up For Peak Performance

Want to feel your best? Look great? Have energy? Eating a balanced diet in combination with regular activity is the way to go. Think nutrient-rich, which means getting the most from the foods you choose. Good nutrition is key for optimal performance; however, research shows that athletes don't need a diet different from what is recommended by the Dietary Guidelines and MyPlate.

Use MyPlate as a visual cue to identify the Five Food Groups and let it serve as a reminder when you build your plate at every meal.



Build a Healthy Plate

- Make half of your plate colorful fruits and vegetables.
- Choose low-fat or fat-free dairy products. They have the same essential nutrients as whole-milk varieties, but less fat and calories.
- Make at least half of your grains whole by choosing 100% whole-grain bread, cereal, rice, pasta, and crackers.
- Enjoy a wider variety of protein-rich foods by including seafood, beans, eggs, and nuts in addition to lean meats and poultry.

For more information and to get your individualized eating plan, visit ChooseMyPlate.gov.

What's a Serving?

Grains

Make at least half your grains whole

1 ounce equals:

- 1 slice of bread
- ½ C cooked cereal
- 1 C cold cereal
- ½ C cooked rice or pasta

Vegetables

Vary your veggies

1 cup equals:

- 2 C raw, leafy greens
- 1 C raw or cooked veggies
- 1 C vegetable juice

Fruits

Focus on Fruits

1 cup equals:

- 1 C fresh, frozen or canned fruit
- 1 medium to large fruit
- 1 C fruit juice
- ½ C dried fruit

Dairy

Get your calcium-rich foods

1 cup equals:

- 1 C milk or yogurt
- 1 ½ oz. natural cheese (Cheddar, mozzarella, Swiss, Parmesan)
- 2 oz. processed cheese (American)

Protein Foods

Go lean with protein

1 ounce equals:

- 1 oz. meat, poultry or fish
- 1 egg
- ¼ cup cooked beans
- 1 Tbsp nut butter
- ½ oz. nuts or seeds

My Three Favorites:

Grains	Vegetables	Fruits	Dairy	Protein Foods
1	1	1	1	1
2	2	2	2	2
3	3	3	3	3



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Nutrition Building Blocks

The nutrients your body needs for health and athletic performance can be sorted into macronutrients and micronutrients. Macronutrients provide fuel and include carbohydrates, protein and fat; these are needed in larger amounts. Micronutrients include vitamins and minerals and are needed in smaller amounts. Adequate water is also essential to your performance.

Macronutrients

CARBOHYDRATE

Carbohydrate is the body's preferred fuel source for all types of physical activity – everything from stealing second base to jumping hurdles, from spiking a volleyball to running a mile. Fifty to 60 percent of your calories should come from carbohydrates. Carbohydrate-rich foods include yogurt, fruit, cereal, pasta, rice, milk and starchy vegetables such as corn, potatoes and peas.

PROTEIN

Protein builds and maintains muscle mass and aids in muscle recovery. Twelve to 15 percent of your total calories should come from protein. Beef, poultry, fish, eggs, beans, nuts, seeds, milk, yogurt and cheese are all good protein sources.

FAT

Fat is needed in every cell of the body and is a concentrated energy source for endurance events such as running a marathon or playing in a long tennis match. Fat should be 20 to 30 percent of your total calories. Sources of healthy fats include vegetable oils, nuts, peanut butter, olives, avocados and fish.

Micronutrients

VITAMINS

Vitamins A, D, E, K, C and the Bs help your body perform processes such as turning carbohydrate into energy. The best way to get vitamins is to eat a diet that includes foods from all the food groups.

MINERALS

Minerals, such as calcium, iron, magnesium and zinc, form such body structures as bone and control certain processes in the body. Eating a variety of foods from all Five Food Groups will help you meet your mineral needs.

Water

Sixty to 75 percent of body weight is water. Adequate hydration helps the body flush toxins. Enjoy water with snacks and throughout the day.



Sample Training Table Menu

Especially during training, your body needs food. This includes choosing a variety of nutrient-rich foods while providing enough calories (fuel). Eating three meals a day plus two to three snacks is the way to supply energy. Here is a sample menu for a typical training day:

Breakfast



- 1 cup whole-grain cereal with sliced banana
- 1 cup milk
- 1 hard-cooked egg
- 1 piece whole-grain toast
- 1 cup fresh berries

Morning Snack



- 7 whole-grain crackers with 2 slices of cheese
- 1 orange

Lunch



- 1 cup lentil soup
- 3 oz. grilled chicken
- 2 cups salad
- 1 Tbsp salad dressing
- 1 cup yogurt
- 1 apple

Afternoon Snack



- 1 cup 100% fruit juice
- 1 cup carrots and cucumbers
- ¼ cup hummus

Dinner



- Refried beans, salsa and cheese rolled in a whole-wheat tortilla
- ½ cup brown rice
- 1 cup sautéed green, red and yellow bell peppers
- 1 cup chocolate milk

Bedtime Snack

optional, check your hunger level



- 8-12 oz. smoothie with fruit, milk and yogurt

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High Performance Foods Grab-n-Go!

Carbohydrates rule as fuel. Carbohydrates are the body's preferred energy source and the main fuel for working muscles. These carbohydrate-rich foods are quick-to-fix for snacks at home, practice or pre-event. Keep foods cold with ice packs, coolers or Thermos® bottles.

- Yogurt and granola
- Fresh fruit
- Whole-grain bagel
- Pretzels
- Fig Newtons
- Breakfast cereals (single-serve)
- Dried apricots, raisins and nuts
- 100% fruit juice
- Trail mix
- Instant breakfast drinks
- Peanut butter and crackers
- Rice cakes
- String cheese and crackers
- PB & J
- Tortilla with cheese
- Tuna and crackers
- Pudding
- Cherry tomatoes
- Baby carrots and hummus
- Animal crackers
- Smoothies
- Granola bars
- Graham crackers
- Baked sweet potato
- Low-fat popcorn
- Flavored milk



Graham Cracker Scram

- 2 graham crackers
- Peanut butter
- Banana
- Milk

Spread peanut butter on two graham crackers. Put banana slices on top. Enjoy a glass of milk with your snack.

Monkey Mix

Makes 6 half-cup servings

- 1 ¼ cups dried bananas
- 1 cup dried papaya
- 1 cup dried mango
- ¼ cup coconut
- ¼ cup mini chocolate chips

Combine ingredients and enjoy!

Grand-Slam Cracker Stax

Makes 4 Stax

- 12 crackers
- 4 slices of cheese
- 4 cucumber or tomato slices

Start with a cracker. Put a piece of cheese on the cracker. Add another cracker. Add a cucumber or tomato slice (or both). Top with a cracker. Open wide!

For more recipes, visit NationalDairyCouncil.org.

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Tips for the Road

If your sport takes you on the road – whether by plane, train or automobile – you often find yourself eating out. With a little consideration, the meals you eat away from home can be just the fuel your body needs.

- Choose waffles, pancakes, oatmeal, yogurt, cereal with milk, fruit and juice
- Try a yogurt parfait
- Select darker, more dense sandwich breads
- Try baked potatoes and salads, small hamburgers or chili
- Enjoy water or milk rather than soft drinks
- Order thick-crust pizza and double the vegetable toppings
- Choose red sauce on pasta



PEAK POINT

Remember, your body needs 40+ nutrients each day and the best way to get them is by eating a wide variety of foods.

Ask the Sports Dietitian

Q: I don't think I get enough vitamins and minerals in my diet. Should I take a supplement?

A: Supplements cannot make up for poor food choices. While they may supply some vitamins and minerals, supplements do not contain all the nutrients found in food. Besides, foods taste better, and it is easier to remember to eat than to pop a pill. To get the 40+ nutrients your body needs each day, eat different foods from each of the Five Food Groups.

Q: What is the best performance diet?

A: The best performance diet is one that includes all Five Food Groups. Some athletes emphasize one food group in the name of performance. However, if you overeat one food group, then you fall short on the other food groups, and you will not get all the vital nutrients your body needs. While carbohydrates are the preferred fuel for exercising muscles and the brain, all of the food groups are important because each provides different macronutrients, vitamins and minerals needed for optimal health and performance. Choose a variety of nutrient-rich foods from all Five Food Groups (dairy, fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins) for peak performance.

