



Nutrition Tips for Athletes

An athlete's diet plays an important role in performance. Nutrition doesn't have to be complicated. Start with these basic steps to help you get the most out of your training.

Don't Skip Meals.

Start your day off right with breakfast and follow through with lunch and dinner as well. Try to add one to three small snacks daily in between meals. Athletes should consume meals or snacks every three to five hours to properly fuel their bodies.

Focus on Carbohydrates – Make Half Your Plate Grains!

Carbohydrates are your primary source of fuel during exercise. They should be a major part of all meals and snacks for athletes. Carbohydrates come from a variety of sources, such as grains, fruits, dairy, beans and some starchy vegetables. Half of your plate for each meal should include grains such as bread, pasta or rice.

Make Your Plate Colorful.

Now that half of your plate consists of grains, 1/4 of your plate should contain vegetables. Try to add a side of fruit to each meal as well. By eating a variety of colors, you provide your body with a wide range of vitamins and minerals important for health and recovery. For picky eaters, try adding veggies or fruits to your favorite foods. Add veggies to your favorite sandwiches, rice or pasta. Add fruit to yogurt or cereal.

Brett Singer MS, RD, CSSD, LD
Appointments: 713-897-7930
email: brett.singer@memorialhermann.org
Twitter: @bsinger10

Include Protein with Each Meal and Snack.

Protein is important for the growth and repair of muscle. The final 1/4 of your plate should be made up of protein. Protein can be found in many foods, including meat, fish, dairy, eggs and beans. Try to add lean protein to each meal and snack.

Eat or Drink to Recover After Each Intense Workout.

After intense exercise, the body has used a lot of energy in the form of carbohydrates which need to be replaced. Have a recovery meal or snack within 30 to 60 minutes after your workout. Include carbohydrates to replenish energy and protein to repair muscle. Add fluids to replace the fluid lost in the form of sweat. Some examples include flavored milk, yogurt and fruit, or a normal meal with grains, fruit, meat and fluids.

Stay Hydrated.

Your fluid needs can change from day to day depending on the environment and the amount of exercise performed. Drink fluids when you are thirsty, which is the brain signaling your body that you need more fluid. Choose water or milk over sodas or other sugary drinks. Sports drinks are an option that can be consumed during hard training sessions or games. If you are concerned about your hydration, check the color of your urine. Your urine should be pale in color, similar to lemonade. Urine that is darker is a sign of dehydration.