

# SPORTS NUTRITION

HEALTHY LIVING FOR ATHLETES

TEXAS  
SCOTTISH RITE HOSPITAL  
FOR CHILDREN

SPORTS  
MEDICINE

## WHY DOES NUTRITION MATTER?

The energy athletes need for practices and competition is supplied by the food they eat. If you put mud in the gas tank of a car, it does not run properly because it lacks the correct fuel. Athletes must supply their bodies with the correct “fuel” or nutrition to compete at their best and help prevent injury. The more energy, or fuel, an athlete uses, the more they need to consume to keep up with their needs.

## HOW MANY CALORIES DOES AN ATHLETE NEED?

Many factors determine the energy needs of an athlete such as gender, age, weight, height, basal metabolic rate (how many calories your body burns at rest) and activity level. As a general rule, aim to eat three well-balanced meals with a couple of nutritious snacks each day. However, if there are concerns about an athlete not getting adequate nutrition, a registered dietitian should be consulted to help determine an appropriate eating plan.



## KEYS FOR SUCCESS:

- **EAT BREAKFAST AND EAT OFTEN** - Your body needs energy to perform at its best. Start the day off with a healthy meal and eat a snack every three to four hours to stay nourished throughout the day.
- **STAY HYDRATED** - Drink water all day long, not just during physical activity. A general guideline is to drink (in ounces) one-half of your body weight (in pounds) on a regular day, and up to your full body weight when exercising in the heat. Sports drinks may be recommended for certain high intensity activities out in the sun and those lasting longer than an hour to replace electrolytes lost through sweat and carbohydrates needed for energy.

*WHAT ABOUT ENERGY DRINKS?* - The caffeine and other ingredients in energy drinks may elevate heart rate and cause fluid loss (diuretic effect) - both of which may be counterproductive and potentially even dangerous when used in high quantities. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends avoiding energy drinks altogether.

- Incorporate at least **3 DIFFERENT FOOD GROUPS** (protein, whole grains, fruits, vegetables and dairy) **IN EACH MEAL** to ensure balanced nutrition and adequate energy intake. Do not omit any food group unless advised by your doctor.
- **READ LABELS** - Look at the serving size and be aware of how many servings are in the container. Choose items that have some protein and carbohydrates but little saturated fat and zero trans fat. Steer away from products with a lot of added sugar. As a general rule, it is best to avoid foods that list sugar as one of the top three ingredients.

The Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children (TSRHC) Sports Medicine Center is a comprehensive practice specializing in the treatment of sports-related conditions and injuries in young and growing athletes. The center offers a complete team of operative and non-operative physicians, nurse practitioners, psychologists, nurses, physical therapists, medical assistants and athletic trainers – all working closely together to provide the best care for each patient.

The TSRHC Sports Medicine Center is a division of Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children.

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## BASIC GUIDELINES

### Choose often:

Fruits and vegetables  
*(bright, colorful and varied)*

Poly- and monounsaturated fats  
*(avocado, salmon, tuna, nuts and olive oil)*

Lean protein  
*(poultry, fish, lean meats, eggs and beans)*

Low-fat dairy  
*(milk, yogurt and cheese)*

100% whole grains  
*(whole grain bread, whole grain pasta, quinoa and brown rice)*

Water

### Limit:

Processed foods loaded with sugar and salt  
*(chips, candy and packaged snacks)*

Saturated and trans fats  
*(butter, high fat meats, snack chips, cakes and cookies)*

Processed, high fat meats  
*(hot dogs, bologna, pepperoni and sausage)*

Full fat dairy  
*(whole milk items)*

Refined grains  
*(white breads, pastas, crackers and rice)*

Sugary drinks  
*(sodas, juice and other flavored drinks)*

These recommendations are basic guidelines. **Any athlete seeking to lose or gain weight should consult a registered dietitian for a personal nutrition plan.**

## 10 GREAT FOODS FOR ATHLETES

1. **Low-fat yogurt** provides calcium to build strong bones.
2. **Leafy greens and legumes** provide iron for energy.
3. **Salmon and tuna** provide omega 3's to reduce inflammation and help speed recovery from injury.
4. **Nuts, seeds and lentils** provide zinc for recovery after rigorous training.
5. **Berries and citrus fruits** provide vitamin C for tissue repair.
6. **Sweet potatoes, bell peppers and carrots** provide vitamin A for cell growth and development.
7. **Eggs** provide protein plus vitamin D to help the body absorb calcium.
8. **Lean cuts of meat (chicken, beef, pork)** provide protein to build and repair muscle plus zinc and iron.
9. **Whole grains** provide complex carbohydrates for energy and optimal performance.
10. **Water** is important to prevent dehydration.

