

NUTRITIONAL PLANS FOR ATHLETES

Eating Well to Enhance Performance

Nutrition plays a key role in sports performance. The quality and quantity of the food you eat (and when you eat it) makes a great difference in the way you practice and compete. You need to think about good nutrition so that you will be able to develop the strong body you want while, at the same time, storing up the necessary energy for endurance.

Nutrition used to be a very confusing topic. We were told that about 60% of our diet should be carbohydrate, 20% protein, and 20% fat. But what constitutes a carbohydrate? What kind of food is protein? Is fat that stuff on the edge of my favorite steak?

Now that's all changed.

The U.S. Dept. of Food and Drug Administration, after years of research and collaboration with dietitians and nutritionists, have revised the food chart. It's much easier to find out how much of what to eat. The new food chart includes six food groups. They are:

- **Meats/Protein**
- **Cereals and grains**
- **Vegetables**
- **Fruit**
- **Dairy products**
- **Fat**

The Foundation for Peak Performance

As an athlete, the food you eat provides the foundation for your conditioning program and your over-all performance in competition.

Athletes often complain of having too little energy or not realizing strength gains from weight lifting. Both of these complaints, as well as others, are often a sign of poor nutritional habits.

Recently an athlete wanted to know why he wasn't gaining muscle mass. He was lifting heavy weights every day. Yet, he hadn't gained any weight in weeks. He also said he was having a hard time at practice and often fell asleep before completing

his homework! We analyzed his diet and found that 56% of his daily calories came from fat. Fat doesn't help you gain more muscle. Carbohydrates and proteins do help, however. We changed his diet and, within one week, he began to gain 1-2 lbs of new muscle mass each week.

Eating the right foods will give you added energy and will supply your body with sufficient calories to build strong muscles. As a rule, your daily nutritional plan should include approximately 65% carbohydrates (from fruits, vegetables, and grains); 20% protein (from dairy products, meats, fish, poultry, and nuts); and 20% fat (from all sources).

Nutritional Plan

The Nutritional Plans for Athletes listed below will explain how to plan your food intake for peak performance. It includes suggestions for gaining weight, maintaining current weight, or for trimming down. In addition, you will learn about the six food groups and how to use them to plan your meals. There are sample meals included for each type of plan. They are offered as suggestions for a typical day's menu, but once you understand the food groups, you can mix and match to suit your tastes.

The Basic Plan

Let's look at the basic patterns you'll need to follow to ensure that you get the right amount of calories from the various food groups each day. Rather than worry about counting calories, we have calculated the number of servings from each food group you need daily, depending on your goals.

<i>Food Group</i>	Trim Down	Shape Up	Gain
Meats/Protein	7	9	10
Grains	10	13	16
Fresh Fruits	3	3	4
Vegetables	4	4	5
Dairy	2	2	3
Fats	2	3	6
Calories	1,800	2,200	3,000

The chart above shows how many servings of foods from each group you need to eat in order to reach your goal. For example, if you are trying to gain weight, then you would follow the serving portions under the "Gain" column.

To find out about the actual kinds of foods that comprise each food group, we suggest you jump over to [The Six Food Groups](#) and review the suggestions there. Once you become familiar with the foods that compose each group, it will be easy to plan your daily nutritional needs.

Once you have become familiar with the various types of food within each food group, you can design your own nutritional plan depending on whether you want to [gain weight](#) or [maintain your current weight](#) or [lose weight](#). Each program includes an example of a typical day's nutritional plan.

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