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Foods and Fluids for Team Sports

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Most athletes know that being part of a team requires them to think and set goals as a group. Competitors in stop-and-go team sports like basketball, soccer, volleyball, baseball, and hockey understand the importance of speed, agility, and power. These athletes also need to know that nutrition and hydration will fuel their team to victory.

Foods: Pre-Workout Fuel

Athletes should fuel their bodies 2 to 3 hours before practices and games with a high-carbohydrate meal or snack (see "Pre-Workout Meal Ideas"). This will give the body enough energy to make it through the workout.

- **Team leaders can organize pre-game meals for the whole team**, including high-energy foods like breads, cereals, pasta, rice, fruits, and vegetables — as well as lean sources of protein. Athletes should fill 2/3 of their plates with high-carbohydrate options.
- **Before exercise, players should eat foods they know work well for them.**
- **Athletes should replace the sodium lost in sweat** — especially for heavy crampers. Athletes can do this by regularly salting their food, eating some salty snacks like pretzels, crackers, and soups and favoring sports drinks over water during training and games.

Pre-Workout Meal Ideas

Menu #1	Menu #2	Menu #3
Ravioli with meat sauce	Ham/veggie sandwich on whole grain bread	Baked chicken breast
Italian bread	Fresh fruit salad	Rice pilaf
Steamed vegetables	Fig bars	Steamed broccoli
Salad with lowfat dressing	Sports drink	Fruit yogurt
Canned fruit		Fruit juice
Lowfat/nonfat milk		

Foods: Post-Workout Fuel

Athletes burn up muscle energy stores during a workout. So it's important that athletes:

- Replenish muscle energy stores by choosing carbohydrate-rich foods within 30 minutes after a practice or game and again within 2 hours.

- Have snacks like cereal mixed with peanuts and raisins, an energy bar, and a sports drink to refuel fast.

Easy Access to Snacks

Many athletes run from school directly to practices and have no time to stop for a high-energy snack to boost energy for performance. To stay fueled, athletes should keep healthy snacks accessible in their backpacks, lockers and coolers.

Backpack and Locker Snacks	Cooler Fuelers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Granola and cereal bars • Energy bars • Dried fruit such as raisins, apricots, apples, or peaches • Dry cereal • Pretzels • Graham crackers and peanut butter • Oatmeal cookies • Fig bars • Animal crackers • Juice boxes • Sports drinks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gatorade® Thirst Quencher • 100% fruit juice • Lowfat/nonfat milk single-servings • Cheese sticks • Yogurt cups and squeeze tubes • Pudding cups • Fresh fruit and/or fruit cups • Fresh veggies • Peanut butter, turkey, ham, or roast beef sandwiches

Eat Well On the Road



Making good food choices while on the road can be tough, especially when restaurant options are limited. However, it's important for athletes to pay attention to nutrition both at home and away. There are plenty of options even at fast food restaurants that will fuel the body for optimal performance.

Good Fast Food Choices

- Pancakes, scrambled eggs, waffles, cereal, English muffins, Ham, Canadian bacon
- Lowfat sandwiches like turkey, ham, roast beef, or veggie submarines, or grilled chicken breast, ham, or lean roast beef sandwiches
- Two regular hamburgers or cheeseburgers
- Tacos, burritos, refried beans, and rice
- Salads with grilled chicken breast, turkey, or ham, extra vegetables and a small amount of light dressing
- Baked potatoes, chili, and mashed potatoes (easy on the toppings)
- Lowfat/nonfat milk, 100% juices, or milkshakes

*Good Sit Down Choices**

- Proteins like chicken breast, or eggs with fruits and vegetables (e.g. salad, steamed vegetables, fresh fruit, fruit salad, or canned fruit).
- Grains like pancakes, toast, bagels, bread, rice, or pasta (with meat sauce or marinara).
- Fresh salads, vegetables, fruits, pasta salads, lean meat slices, and soups. (Go easy on dressings and salads with creamy mayonnaise-type dressing.)
- Lowfat/nonfat milk, 100% fruit juices, fruit smoothies, milkshakes.

Fluids: Hydration is Key

Water is a key component of the athlete's body, making up 60 to 65 percent of total body weight.

- If athletes lose too much fluid in sweat without replacing what they've lost in both fluids and important electrolytes (like sodium and potassium), they risk becoming dehydrated.
- Dehydration can diminish energy and impair performance. Even a 2-percent loss of body weight through sweat (i.e., 3 pounds for a 150-pound player) can put athletes at a disadvantage. Some athletes, however, lose more than a gallon of sweat during a practice or game, especially in hot weather.

How to maintain peak performance

Athletes who train in hot and humid conditions, whether it's outside or in a gym, and don't properly replace their fluids run the risk of dehydration. Because dehydration can take a serious toll on performance, it's important for athletes to know how to get plenty of fluid:

Remember fluids throughout the day.

This may be as simple as grabbing a sports drink first thing in the morning, then using fountains, coolers, and cafeteria beverages as triggers for drinking throughout the day.

Hydrate 2 to 3 hours before practices and competitions.

Athletes should aim for at least 16 ounces (2 cups) of fluid at this time and an additional 8 ounces

(1 cup) 10 to 20 minutes prior to getting into competition.

Drink during workouts or competition.

Sports drinks, like Gatorade, can help ward off dehydration and muscle cramps because they help replenish both fluid and electrolytes (i.e., sodium and potassium) lost in sweat without overdrinking.

*Balance the meal with protein, carbohydrates, fruits, and vegetables

1 Gisolfi, C.V. and D.R. Lamb. Perspectives in Exercise Science and Sports Medicine: Fluid Homeostasis During Exercise, Chapt 1 pp. 1-38, 1990.

2 Gopinathan, P.M. et al. Arch Environ Health, 43:15-17, 1998



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