



## Eating to Excel

Good nutrition can make the difference between an average athlete and a great athlete. What you eat on and off the court impacts not only how you train, but also your ability to train longer and at a higher intensity. Excelling on the court comes from hours of training, and properly fueling your body to improve focus and prevent the onset of fatigue. The recipe for eating well is simple, choose complex carbs, adequate protein, at least 5 servings of vegetables, 2 servings of fruit, and healthy fats.

**Choose healthy carbohydrates.** Despite the headline news which promote low carb, high fat diets, you need carbohydrates to fuel your muscles. Not all carbs are created equal, and you can think of them as two distinct entities. **Simple carbohydrates**, or the energy found in sweets, soda's and refined white bread provide a quick burst of energy, followed by a steep decline in energy output, leading to fatigue, irritability, poor attention, reduced athletic performance and reduced endurance.

**Complex carbohydrates**, on the other hand, take longer to breakdown, and provide a steady state of fuel over the long term. Choose from sweet potatoes, steel cut oatmeal/whole grains, beans/legumes, fruits and vegetables.

**Key Point: *Skimping on meals, or choosing highly refined carbohydrates, or poor food choices, leads to fatigue, irritability, poor attention and impaired athletic performance.***

**Eat enough protein to meet your needs.** Protein is important to build, maintain and repair muscle tissue. Eat sufficient protein, about 1.2 gm/kg spread throughout the day. Include hard boiled eggs, turkey slices, sliced leftover chicken breast, slices of roast beef, fish, tofu.

**Include healthy fats.** Focus on healthy fats from fish, nuts and plant foods like olives and avocado. Avoid fried food, such as French Fries or chicken nuggets, which are highly processed and high in saturated fat and trans fatty acids. *These foods contribute to inflammation and oxidative stress, which complicates recovery.*

**Stay hydrated.** Good hydration contributes to endurance, strength and power. If your concentration on the court is lagging, and your ability to perform falters, dehydration may be at play. Its crucial to begin exercise fully hydrated by drinking plenty of water 2-3 hours before game time. Stay hydrated by drinking at least ½ C of water every 15 minutes and rehydrate afterwards to make up for fluid loss. Signs you're dehydrated:

- thirst
- early onset fatigue
- increased perception of effort
- decreased exercise capacity
- increased body Temperature
- faster breathing/heart rate
- Dizziness

Sport drinks claim to replace electrolytes, but are also a source of inflammatory sugar, not to mention additional colors/chemicals that promote inflammation. Make your own electrolyte drink made with 2 C fresh water, 1 C coconut water, a pinch of sea salt, a teaspoon of honey, and a freshly squeezed orange. Electrolytes are also found in slices of oranges, a small spinach salad, an apple with almond butter, strawberries and yogurt, watermelon, avocado and turkey slices, banana with peanut butter.



## **Game Day Nutrition**

There are a few golden rules when it comes to eating on game day:

- *Remember, proper nutrition for the "big tournament/race/meet" does not happen on the day of the event alone. It happens the days, weeks, and months leading up to the competition*
- Never experiment with a new dietary/supplement protocol on game day. First, try it out prior to a practice/training session to make sure you tolerate it well
- As you get closer to the game/competition, make your meals smaller. Additionally, you may want to limit dairy, fat and fibrous carbohydrate sources during the last one to one and one-half hours pre-event/practice, as these may cause GI issues.

### ***Timed feedings, 3-4 hours before an event***

Have a light meal with foods that are easy to digest such as a turkey sandwich on whole grain bread, slices of melon, water with slices of lemon.

*30-60 Min before the event*

As match time approaches, have a smaller meal with a small amount of carbs and a limited amount of fat; try a small plain yogurt with berries, or whole grain pretzels with fruit.

*During the event, you may need a snack if you're at an all-day match or tournament lasting more than 1 hour.* Choose a smaller meal and quicker digesting foods, for a small amount of carbs and a limited amount of fat like pretzels and fruit, energy bar, fruit smoothie, ¼ C banana chips, small banana with honey, ½ sandwich, vegetable juice.

When exercising intensely for more than 1 hour, have 30-60 gm of carbohydrates *in small amounts during each hour of activity.* Example, 1 apple with 2 TB peanut butter (30 gm carb), 1 C plain yogurt with ½ C pineapple, 2 tsp honey or maple syrup (40 gm carb), peanut butter sandwich on whole wheat bread with 2 tsp honey (50 gm carb), peanut butter sandwich on whole wheat bread with 2 tsp honey and a small banana (60 gm carb).

### ***After the event***

Replenish and reload muscles with glycogen with slice of whole grain bread and peanut butter, or apple slices with almond butter, Greek yogurt with berries, smoothie with plain yogurt, berries, avocado, handful of baby spinach. Include tall glass of lemon water.



## Planning a Nutritious Meal

Without adequate calories from the healthiest food sources, you will struggle to achieve your performance goals. Plan a nutritious meal by choosing at least one food from each category. Combining foods this way (carbohydrates, protein, healthy fat) will maintain stable blood sugar, which will keep your energy up.

Carbohydrates	Protein	Healthy Fat
Fruit	Whole eggs ( white and yolk)	Avocado
Steel Cut Oatmeal	Greek yogurt	Peanut butter
Starchy vegetables (sweet/white potatoes, squash)	Milk	Nuts and seeds
Non-starchy vegetables (broccoli, leafy greens, carrots)	String cheese	Olive or canola oil (the latter, if baking)
Whole-grain bread or crackers	Lean red meats (roast beef slices)	Coconut oil
High-fiber, non-sugary cereals	Poultry (turkey slices)	Flax seed (add to baking or cooking)
Quinoa	Fish	Coconut butter/milk
Brown or wild rice	Hummus	Nut/seed butters

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**Eileen Boté, RD, LDN, IFNCP** is a registered dietitian who received a Bachelors of Science degree in nutrition from the University of New Hampshire. In addition, she holds an advanced certification from the Integrative and Functional Nutrition Academy and has applied her knowledge in private practice as she delves into root cause of illness. She believes strongly in the whole person approach to wellness, including mind, body, and spirit with healthy food at center stage.

Always passionate about good food and nutrition, the search for real answers became critical when faced with her own daughter's significant health concerns. While finding answers was one part of the equation, creating meals to satisfy a young and picky palate was another. Creating recipes geared towards healing has become a passion. She has shared her love of cooking through her involvement with her local high school where she developed culinary programs for students in grades K-12. In addition, she serves on the board of her local food co-op where she shares nutrition insight as it shapes policy and day to day running of the organization.

She works as a dietitian in functional medicine at the globally-renowned UltraWellness Center in Lenox, and she has a private practice in the Berkshires of Western MA. Her area of expertise includes working with clients who need guidance with weight loss/maintenance, health optimization, metabolic syndrome, pre-diabetes, and insulin resistance, cardiovascular disease, digestive disorders, cognitive decline, food allergies and sensitivities, autoimmunity, and cancer prevention.

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