

Eating for Better Athletic Performance

What's on your plate?

No matter how athletic you are, you can't outperform a bad diet. But you can eat your way to better athletic performance. And it's not that hard. Just eat real, whole foods.

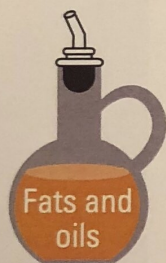
What does that mean? It means food that isn't processed, packaged or handed to you through a drive-through window. It means food that doesn't have a complicated list of ingredients you can't pronounce. Eating real, whole foods means you're going to feel better, play better and perform better.

Inflammation is not your friend

All athletes have one common enemy – inflammation. Inflammation is part of your body's reaction to injury or infection and, in the short term, it's a good thing. When inflammation is chronic, it's not a good thing at all.

In fact, inflammation is the common thread in all types of chronic disease. In athletes, inflammation stops you from performing your best and recovering quickly. And it hurts.

But the right food – a balanced diet that includes whole foods – will help you fight inflammation.

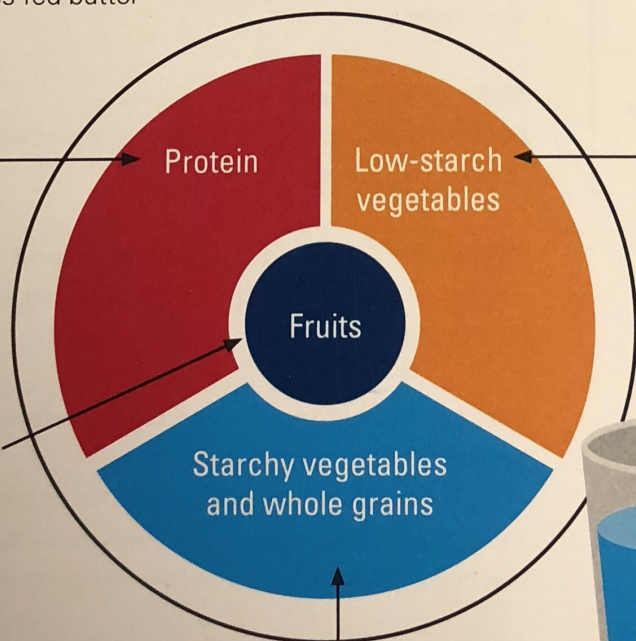


Fats and oils – extra virgin olive oil, unrefined coconut oil or grass-fed butter

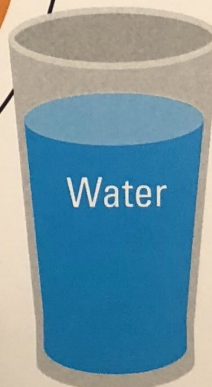
Protein – poultry, fish, seafood, eggs, red meat, beans, soy products, raw seeds and nuts

Fruits – apples, blueberries, peaches, grapes, bananas, strawberries

Starchy vegetables and whole grains – potatoes, sweet potatoes, squash, quinoa, oats, wild or brown rice, beans, lentils, peas



Low-starch vegetables – broccoli, cucumbers, lettuce, greens, carrots, mushrooms, onions, tomatoes, sweet and hot peppers



Drink water, water and more water

You should drink at least half of your body weight in ounces of water each day. For example, if you weigh 150 pounds, you should drink 75 ounces of water every day. If you're an athlete, you need to drink much more than that – especially on workout or game days. If not, you'll get dehydrated. Dehydration causes:

- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Muscle cramps

Make your own sports drink

Store-bought sports drinks can contain excess sugar and preservatives. Enjoy the benefits of sports drinks, while avoiding the pitfalls, by making your own with this simple recipe.

4 cups water

¼-½ tsp. sea salt

Juice from 1 orange

Juice from 1 lemon

7-10 drops liquid stevia or 2-3 tsp. honey or other natural sugar

Pinch of baking soda (optional)

Combine all ingredients in a one-quart container and shake. Shake again each time you drink.

7 ways to boost your athletic performance

Eat real, whole foods

This gives you an edge in energy, endurance and recovery.

Don't fear fat

A healthy diet should include servings of healthy fat in every meal or snack. Cook with coconut oil, use grass-fed butter, munch on raw nuts or add them to foods. Other healthy fats include olives and extra virgin olive oil, avocados, nut butters and eggs (eat the yolk!). Avoid fats in packaged or fast food.

Fill your plate with protein and complex carbohydrates

Fill about one-third of your plate with protein. The other two-thirds of your plate should be filled with complex carbohydrates like crunchy vegetables, starchy vegetables and whole grains.

Drink your water

Drink half of your body weight in water each day – athletes should drink even more. Limit sports drinks that contain sugar and preservatives to competitions and avoid energy drinks completely. Also, real coconut water is a great electrolyte drink.

Make fruit your dessert

Eat a fist-sized serving of fruit at the end of your meal to help you stay fuller, longer.

Your parents were right – chew your food

Each meal should take you between 20 and 60 minutes to finish.

Give your food some time to digest before you eat again

Try to space your meals at least five hours apart. Try not to eat right before bed. Give your body a few hours to digest dinner before you go to sleep.

For more information

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