

EAT TO COMPETE: NUTRITION IN SPORTS

inSIGHT
Psychological™

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Why is nutrition important?

Nutrition is an important part of sport performance for young athletes, in addition to allowing for optimal growth and development. Macronutrients, micronutrients and fluids in the proper amounts are essential to provide energy for growth and activity.

To optimize performance, young athletes need to learn what, when and how to eat and drink before, during and after activity.

Proper nutrition is vital for child and adolescent athletes to attain proper growth and perform optimally in sports. Young athletes need to learn what foods are good for energy, when to eat certain foods, how to eat during an event, and when and what to eat to replenish after activity. A well-balanced diet containing appropriate amounts of macronutrients (protein, carbohydrates and fat) and micronutrients (vitamins and minerals) is essential to provide enough energy for growth and activity. Fluids are also essential for hydration to support growth and athletic performance.

EATING DISORDERS & ATHLETES

Athletics are a great way to build self-esteem, promote physical conditioning, and demonstrate the value of teamwork, but not all athletic stressors are positive.

The pressure to win and an emphasis on body weight and shape can create a toxic combination. Athletic competition can also be a factor contributing to severe psychological and physical stress.

When the pressures of athletic competition are added to an existing cultural emphasis on thinness, the risks increase for athletes to develop disordered eating.

RISK FACTORS

Sports that emphasize appearance, weight requirements, or muscularity (gymnastics, diving, bodybuilding, or wrestling)

Endurance sports such as track and field, running, swimming

Overvalued belief that lower body weight will improve performance.

Training for a sport since childhood or being an elite athlete

Low self-esteem; family dysfunction (including parents who live through the success of their child in sport); families with eating disorders; chronic dieting; history of physical or sexual abuse; peer, family, and cultural pressures to be thin, and other traumatic life experiences.

Three risk factors are thought to particularly contribute to a female athlete's vulnerability to developing an eating disorder: social influences emphasizing thinness, performance anxiety, and negative self-appraisal of athletic achievement. A fourth factor is identity solely based on participation in athletics.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS FOR ATHLETES

- Positive, person-oriented coaching style rather than negative, performance-oriented coaching style.
- Social influence and support from teammates with healthy attitudes towards size and shape.
- Coaches who emphasize factors that contribute to personal success such as motivation and enthusiasm rather than body weight or shape.
- Coaches and parents who educate, talk about and support the changing athletes body



CHECK OUT TIPS FOR COACHES

<https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/learn/help/coaches-trainers>

RESOURCES

If you're looking for additional nutrition resources, here are outlets that you may find beneficial.

They offer educational information and are purposed to help athletes lead healthier lives.

NUTRITION CONSIDERATIONS FOR HEALING

PROPER NUTRITION CAN AID IN THE HEALING PROCESS FOR ATHLETES.

[HTTPS://WWW.NCBI.NLM.NIH.GOV/PMC/ARTICLES/PMC8746600/](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8746600/)

THE GLUTEN FREE DIET

ATHLETES THAT FOLLOW A GLUTEN FREE DIET REQUIRE SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS TO FUEL THEIR DIETS.

[HTTPS://GREENLETES.COM/GLUTEN-FREE-ATHLETE/](https://greenletes.com/gluten-free-athlete/)

SUPPLEMENT GUIDES FOR THE HIGH PERFORMER

SUPPLEMENTS AND VITAMINS CAN HELP ATHLETES RECOVER QUICKER AND PERFORM BETTER DURING COMPETITION. HERE ARE SUPPLEMENTS THAT CAN HELP HIGH PERFORMANCE ATHLETES.

[HTTPS://SIMPLIFASTER.COM/ARTICLES/TOP-10-SUPPLEMENTS-FOR-SPEED-AND-POWER/](https://simplifaster.com/articles/top-10-supplements-for-speed-and-power/)

EAT TO LEAN UP

GOOD NUTRITION AND STAYING LEAN CAN BENEFIT AGILITY AND ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE HOWEVER IT IS IMPORTANT TO EAT IN SUCH A WAY THE ATHLETE DOES NOT GET DEPRIVED.

[HTTPS://WWW.SPARTAN.COM/BLOGS/UNBREAKABLE-NUTRITION/HOW-TO-GET-LEAN](https://www.spartan.com/blogs/unbreakable-nutrition/how-to-get-lean)

HYDRATION

HYDRATION IS KEY! SINCE ATHLETES LOSE A LOT OF WATER THROUGH SWEAT, IT IS IMPERATIVE THEY RE-HYDRATE AND REPLENISH WITH WATER.

[HTTPS://FAMILYDOCTOR.ORG/ATHLETES-THE-IMPORTANCE-OF-GOOD-HYDRATION/](https://familydoctor.org/athletes-the-importance-of-good-hydration/)