

Unlike common people, you have uncommon goals and dreams that require **100% of your effort, determination, and discipline**. You are beginning to understand how important this is in your physical conditioning, but you must also understand that these same principles apply to your eating habits. Nutrition is the one component of an athletic program where most people are misinformed or misunderstood. Everywhere you turn, you hear or read about someone who had gained or lost 20 pounds in one week. This type of information is misleading and dangerous. As athletes, you must know facts about diet and dietary habits, in order to perform at your optimum level. You cannot run a high-performance racecar on kerosene. **Excess weight in the form of fat reduces speed and endurance of any athlete.**

Fueling for Football

Football is a game of strength, speed and skill; all of which can be affected by what, when and how much an athlete eats and drinks.

Athletes need to apply the same effort to proper fueling as they give during practices and competition. Players sometimes neglect nutrition, which can result in poor performance.

Proper nutrition is extremely important for football players. Because football requires short bursts of energy, eating enough carbohydrates is critical. As an athlete, you are always looking for the edge over your opponent. Nutrition is that edge. It does not only impact strength, speed and stamina, but recovery as well. You, as athletes, are responsible for taking control. You must provide your body with optimal body fueling. A player who comes to practice without having eaten breakfast or lunch, or skimps on fluid intake during hot summer practices, is not going to reach his full potential – which ultimately affects the performance of the team as a whole.

CARBS ARE KEY

Football is a stop-and-go sport with short burst of intense effort, followed by rest. Therefore, the primary fuel for football is **carbohydrates**. An ideal diet for football players requires 55 to 60 percent of their daily caloric intake to come from carbohydrates, 15 percent from protein and 30 percent from fat. Simply stated, your diet should be 2/3 carbohydrates and 1/3 protein, with an emphasis on moderate fat. Carbohydrates-containing foods with lower fat should be emphasized example: bagels over doughnuts, mashed potatoes over fries, grilled chicken over fried, frozen yogurt over ice cream.

Upping the amount of carbohydrates in your diet will provide you with more available energy during practice and games. Less fried foods often decrease the chance of an upset stomach, which may also boost performance.

During Two-a-days/Pre-season, carbohydrates must be the main fuel source. Players will not recover in time for the next practice unless carbohydrate intakes are adequate. Watch your protein intake. While protein is needed in an athlete's diet to build and maintain muscle mass, excess protein consumption will be stored as fat and may dehydrate the body. For example, turkey and cheese roll-ups, fruit, vegetables, Gatorade bars etc, are good food choices.

PRE-GAME MEALS

The primary goal for providing athletes with a pre-game meal is to fuel the body for competition. The best strategy is to choose lower-fat foods. Fats take longer to digest, so high-fat meals can leave the athlete with a full, heavy stomach and not enough energy to perform at his best. When planning a pre-game meal early in the day try to avoid foods such as, fried meats, fried potatoes, bacon, and sausage. Instead, choose foods that favor leaner protein and carbohydrates such as bread, cereal, and toast. For afternoon/evening games choose grilled, baked, or broiled meats, tomato instead of cream sauce, low-fat milk, and baked or broiled, instead of fried, potatoes. Additional food options for pre-game meals include:

- Turkey or ham subs, fruit salad, and frozen yogurt
- Eggs, waffles, ham, fruit
- Pasta with red meat sauce, grilled chicken, salad and fruit
- Smoothie, cereal, fruit
- 8-ounce cuts of steak with carbohydrates on the side. • For beverages: sports drinks, juices, and water.

POST-GAME MEALS

Before you sit down for a meal, you should begin by replenishing your fluids and carbohydrates immediately following the game/lifting ... sports drinks, pretzels, sports bars (containing the proper nutritional ratio), or fruit. This is usually the hungriest time for the players, some good choices include:

- Steak kebabs, rice
- Salmon, green beans, and corn
- Roast beef, mashed potatoes and salad
- Hamburgers, grilled chicken sandwiches, baked potato and juice

When it comes to weight loss or weight gain, you must do it in small increments. In order to add Lean Muscle Mass and discard Fat Mass you must combine a proper nutritional plan and strength training program. By adding or subtracting the extra 500 to 1000 calories you are allowing your body to change its composition.

POST GAME/LIFT SNACK

For optimal recovery after competition/practice or lifting, you need to consume a protein-carbohydrate mix. The snack should contain 6 grams of protein and 35 grams of carbohydrates. Suggestions include peanut butter crackers, trail mix, yogurt with cereal, a bagel with cream cheese or peanut butter, or a sports bar containing the right proportion. **This snack should be consumed within 30 minutes after competition, practice or lifting for optimal benefit.**

TIPS FOR WEIGHT LOSS

To lose 1 to 2 pounds a week you must subtract 500 to 1000 calories per day to equal 3,500 calories per week.

- Eat more fruits and vegetables
- Limit fast food intake or make healthy fast food choices
- Drink more water
- Limit your amount of soda, candies, desserts, and other simple sugars.
- Do not eat any fried foods.
- Do not restrict carbs.
- **Do not skip meals**, but do decrease portion size. It is usually not the pasta that is the problem but the amount that you choose to eat! A little off the top at each meal works very well. For example, eat 25 chicken wings instead of 40, drink a 12-ounce beverage instead of a 20-ounce glass, or eat a 12-ounce steak instead of one that is 24 ounces.
- Trim calories by cutting down on condiments and snacks.
- Many find it easier to lose weight by eating smaller, more frequent meals that are more evenly divided throughout the day, instead of three meals.
- Decrease calories from beverages by diluting juices, choosing diet soda or ice tea, and using smaller glasses.
- Include filling foods such as protein and foods that require chewing: salads, vegetables, a baked potatoes, meat, and fruits.
- When eating fast food, choose regular instead of super-size meals.
- Put snacks into a bowl instead of sitting down with the whole bag.

Common Nutrition Mistakes

- Not Eating Breakfast
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not eating at regular intervals
- Eating too much protein and short-changing carbohydrates

TIPS FOR WEIGHT GAIN

To gain 1 to 2 pounds per week, you must add 500 to 1000 calories per day to equal 3,500 extra calories a week. Simply put: you must take in more calories than you burn off!

- Eat 4 to 5 meals plus 2 to 3 snacks a day.
- Start a meal with food, not liquids, so have the sandwich first, and then the shake.
- Replace low-or no-calorie beverages with juice, lemonade, milk, and sports drinks instead of water.
- Try to eat one-quarter more at every meal and snack.
- Keep snack food around to nibble on.
- Add higher calorie foods to every meal: granola instead of sugared cereal.
- Add nuts to cereal or snacks.
- Eat bagels instead of bread.
- Add more protein, but only four ounces more a day, through food, **not supplements**. Choose cheese, low-fat lunchmeats, and an extra piece of chicken, milk and yogurt.

EATING ON THE RUN

Breakfasts:

- Pancakes, waffles, or French toast w/syrup – no butter
- Egg sandwich – no cheese
- Unbuttered English muffin, bran muffin, bagels or toast w/preserves, jelly or apple butter
- Low-fat milk or yogurt w/fresh fruit and a bagel
- Low-fat granola bars – Kellogg's or Nature Valley
- Dry or cooked cereals w/or w/o milk w/fresh or dried fruit
- Pita bread stuffed with peanut butter (high in calories) and raisins and cottage cheese, or veggies and low fat cheese.

Lunches:

- Vegetables or chili stuffed potatoes
- Salad bars: use low fat dressings, veggies, dried beans, beets, carrots, pasta, and add crackers, rolls, or bread
- Pack lunches: Sandwich whole grain bread, fruit, fig bars, and vegetables or soup
- Pastas with meat or meatless sauce
- Tacos without sour cream
- Baked or broiled meats instead of fried
- Fantastic soups or pasta meals that can be reconstituted water
- Fast Food restaurants: Grilled chicken sandwiches, grilled hamburgers, roast beef sandwiches, baked potatoes, or salad bars (no mayonnaise, special sauce, butter, sour cream etc.)
- Thick crust pizzas with veggies – no extra cheese

Dinners:

- Meats should be baked, broiled, or grilled instead of fried
- Pasta with clam sauce or marinara sauce
- Shellfish in tomato sauce or steamed without butter
- Chicken breast without the skin with rice and vegetables
- Stir fry dishes with lean meats and lots of vegetables in minimal oil
- Grilled salmon, tuna, swordfish, or mackerel

Snacks:

- Whole grain crackers
- Graham crackers
- String cheese
- Low-fat yogurt
- Dry-roasted nuts
- Fruit juices
- Bagels
- Bread sticks
- Pretzels
- Dry cereal
- Fresh fruits
- Dried fruits

Watch the caffeine – It lowers blood sugar and can make you hungrier. It is also a diuretic and can be dehydrating.

ADDITIONAL HEALTHY CHOICES

- Bread, bagels, pita, muffins, biscuits or rolls with less than 2g of fat
- Cold cereal with less than 2g of fat
- Hot cereals
- Corn tortillas
- Air Popcorn – Unbuttered
- Pretzels, Rice cakes
- Pasta, Rice, Barley
- Crackers with 1g of fat
- Fresh vegetables
- All fresh fruit
- 1% Low fat or skim Milk
- 1% Low fat Yogurt
- Cheeses with 2 or fewer grams of fat/oz.
- Frozen dairy desserts with 2g of fat or less ½ cup
- Beef: Top Round
- Beef: Eye of Round
- Pork: Tenderloin
- Chicken breast without skin • Egg Whites
- All dried beans, peas
- Canned Fish packed in Water

Setting Nutrition Goals

With a little education, football players can make changes that will be felt both on and off the field. The team should set nutrition goals together, such as:

- Drinking on a schedule
- Refueling at half-time
- Eating immediately after practices or games

What to Eat:

Football players need carbohydrates to fuel hard-working muscles. Bread, pasta, rice, potatoes, fruits and vegetables should be the bulk of a football player's diet filling up 2/3 of the plate at every meal. Protein foods, such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs, dairy foods, nuts, soy products and beans, are essential for good health, but are not the primary fuel source for exercise, and so should occupy only 1/3 of the plate.

All Day Fueling:

Unlike professional football players who practice during the day, younger athletes don't take the field or hit the gym until after school. Since bodies don't run well on empty, eating every 3 to 4 hours is necessary to properly fuel both the body and mind. Encourage your athletes to:

- Eat within 1 hour of waking up.
- Eat something at lunch.
- Snack before practice on a sports drink, energy bar, cereal or granola bar.
- Bring a post-exercise snack to eat before leaving the locker room. Good choices include an energy bar, bagel, crackers or fruit with a sports drink.

Drink Up!

All players benefit when the body is optimally hydrated. This is not just a game-day issue, but a daily priority. To prevent dehydration, especially in hot, humid environments, athletes need to drink often and enough. Get your athletes off to the right start:

- Recommend sports drinks over water, because sports drinks taste great, contain electrolytes, like sodium, and may help prevent cramping.
- Weigh players before and after practices to determine individual fluid losses and monitor them to replace every pound lost by drinking at least 20 ounces of fluid.
- Ask athletes to bring their own sports bottles and drinks so their favorite fluid is readily available.
- Remind athletes that spitting out fluids doesn't hydrate the body!
- Educate players about the importance of seeing what they pee. The goal is light-colored urine and lots of it!

Athlete Recommended Snacks (pre-game and post-game)

The food and beverages an athlete consumes before and after competition and practice is just as important as what is consumed during an event.

Snacks

- Pretzels
- Fig Newton's
- Graham Crackers
- Rice Cakes
- Cut-up Fruit (oranges, apples, bananas)
- Crackers
- Bagels

- Granola Bars
- Cliff Bars/Power Bars
- Raisins, Dried Fruit

Beverages

- Water
- Gatorade or other sports drinks
- Fruit Juice

Items NOT APPROPRIATE before, during or after athletic competition:

- Soda pop or carbonated drinks of any kind
- Candy
- Cakes or cupcakes
- Donuts or muffins
- Chips
- Cookies

Tips for Hydration

Before you exercise: Start **1-2 hours** before you lift/practice or competition; drink **10-20 ounces** of fluid. **Fifteen minutes** before competition, drink **8-16 ounces** of fluid.

During exercise: Drink **4-8 ounces** of cool fluid every **10-20 minutes**.

After exercise: Keep drinking fluids beyond the **“thirsty” feeling**, to ensure proper hydration. Sports drinks will help to replenish energy stores quickly after exercise.

1. Always drink cool fluid if available, because it empties from the stomach faster than warm fluid.
2. Choose a sports drink over water if you plan to exercise for an extended period of time or at a high level of intensity. **Half drink half water.**
3. Urinate clear before practice
4. **If you feel or see any of the following symptoms locate a coach immediately:**
 - **Sudden dizziness, weakness, faintness, and headache.**
 - **Warm, blotchy skin and NO SWEATING!**
 - **Rapid heartbeat and/or a sudden stomach ache (vomiting)**
 - **Uncontrollable muscle cramps.**