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HOW TO FUEL YOUR

Student Athlete



MILK MEANS MORE



A NOTE TO PARENTS

Nutrition can be confusing. Add the extra layers of fueling a student for school and sport can make it seem overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be!

Remembering a few tips, tricks and visuals will help set your student athlete up for success in the classroom and on the playing field.



WHAT ARE MACROS AND WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

Macronutrients (Macros)—carbohydrates, protein and fat—are what fuel, build and maintain the body. Each plays a critical role in the body, and the right mix is important for athletes to perform as well as possible.

- 1. Carbohydrates.** The body loves carbohydrates (carbs) and for good reason. Carbs are your body's first choice for fuel during exercise. On heavy training days, or leading up to an event, most of an athlete's calories should come from high-quality carbohydrate sources. Fruits, veggies, grains and milk all contain carbs. At least half the calories an athlete eats in a day should come from healthy, high-carb foods like yogurt, milk, fruit, starchy veggies (like potatoes), popcorn, rice, beans and whole grain breads, cereal and pasta. Simple carbs, like those found in sports drinks, sugar or white bread should be eaten less frequently, but are helpful in providing quick energy right before or during exercise.
- 2. Protein.** Protein helps to build, repair and maintain muscles. An athlete needs to eat some protein daily but don't forget that carbs fuel muscles. Milk, yogurt, cheese, nuts, seeds, soy, eggs, fish, poultry and lean beef are good protein options.
- 3. Fat.** Healthy fats in the diet are important to help absorb certain vitamins and provide energy. Healthy fats that are best for athletes are nuts, seeds, avocado and liquid oils such as canola, olive, corn or soybean oil. Fats should be an 'add on' in the meal, not the focus.

Macros are important to keep in mind when planning. But when thinking only of carbs, fat and protein, it can be challenging to plan a meal. This is where the Athlete's Plate can be helpful: use it as a visual to help create balanced meals.

Along with macros, micronutrients (also known as vitamins and minerals) are also important for academic and athletic performance. A diet with plenty of variety, including a lot of colors from produce, will help your athlete get these important nutrients.



AT HOME

Plan ahead. It isn't nutrition if they aren't eating it! Involve your student athlete in meal planning to make sure the weekly menu includes things they will eat. Ask them to find new recipes that fit the Athlete's Plate. Based on the menu and what you have on hand, create your shopping list.

When you get home from grocery shopping, cut up fruits and vegetables for the week and prep food so it is faster to cook at mealtime. Plan a few dishes you can prep ahead of time so you are able to put them in the oven when you walk in the door in the evening.

When it comes to mealtime, involve your child in preparing the meals he/she has planned whenever possible. The more engaged they are in creating meals, the more likely they will be to eat it. They will also learn valuable skills that will last a lifetime.

Get creative. A meal doesn't have to look exactly like the Athlete's Plate. Just make sure it has all the components of the plate. For example:

- Banana Dog: Nut butter on whole wheat bread or tortilla wrapped around a banana with a drizzle of honey
- Yogurt Parfait: Greek Yogurt with berries and whole grain cereal
- Chunky Monkey Smoothie: Low fat chocolate or white milk blended with vanilla yogurt, frozen banana and peanut butter.
- Loaded Baked Potato: Baked Potato topped with chili and low-fat cheese. Add carrot sticks and milk on the side.
- Whole grain spaghetti and meat sauce, steamed broccoli, cottage cheese with blueberries
- Baked Salmon with brown rice, side salad, whole grain bread, mixed berries and milk

When you are planning, don't forget about school meals! School breakfast and lunch options provide balanced meals designed specifically for students.

AT THE STORE

Make the perimeter of the store your focus. This is where the freshest, least processed items are such as fruits and vegetables, dairy products, eggs and fresh meats. Travel into the aisles for specific items from your list that may be more processed.



Use the Athlete's plate as a reminder when you shop. When an athlete is in-season, the athlete's plate should include:

Grains (1/4 - 1/2 plate)

- Whole grains provide long-lasting energy, fiber, vitamins and minerals that are often not found naturally in processed grains like white flour
- Choose brown rice, whole grain breads and pastas
- When looking at labels, the first word on the ingredient list should be the word "whole" rather than "enriched"

Protein (1/4 plate)

- Eggs (found in the dairy section) are an inexpensive, high quality source of protein
- Fish like tuna and salmon contain healthy fats and Vitamin D
- Choose lean meats like chicken breasts, and beef and pork cuts like loin and round
- Beans provide protein, carbohydrate and fiber—a nutrition powerhouse!

Dairy (1 serving/meal)

- Dairy products provide high-quality protein and carbohydrates
- Include a glass of milk with each of your athlete's meals; choose low fat or fat free milk
- Greek yogurt contains higher amounts of protein than traditional yogurt
- Cheese can be a great grab and go snack for your athlete. Try cheese sticks or have cheese pre-cut



Produce (1/4 -1/2 plate)

- Variety in color = variety in nutrients
- Frozen fruits and vegetables are picked and frozen at the peak of its nutrition making them a nutritious and affordable option
- Produce purchased in-season is often the most affordable
- Look for low- or no-sodium-added canned vegetables and canned fruit packed in its own juice

ON THE ROAD

Encourage your student athlete to be prepared. Consider their travel schedule when making weekly shopping lists because you never know what may be available on the road. Encourage your student athlete to pack a cooler with an ice pack to make sure he has the right fuel at the right time. A few simple snacks like a yogurt parfait, a turkey sandwich on whole grain bread, and apple or banana and nut butter and milk or chocolate milk are great options on the go.

Taking healthy snacks or meals to games, tournaments and meets will ensure they will have the proper fuel rather than relying on what is available. But, if needed, a concession stand might have some healthy snack options, as well. Look for fresh fruit, granola bars, trail mix or nuts or chocolate milk.

Eating on the road happens frequently as a student athlete. When eating out, encourage your child to make a few healthier swaps. Try baked or grilled options instead of fried, swap out fries for fruit, vegetables or a side salad, choose whole wheat bread instead of white for sandwiches and switch sugary drinks like soda for a milk or chocolate milk. Don't forget that there is no 'bad' food, but choosing healthier options more often may have a positive impact in the classroom and the playing field.



WHEN TO EAT

Eating regularly throughout the day beginning with breakfast will help maintain energy and maximize athletic performance. Planning to eat regularly every 3-4 hours will keep brains and muscles fueled properly. Three meals and three snacks a day most days is a great place to start.

Sample 1-Day Menu

Breakfast

- Whole Grain English Muffin with scrambled egg, cheese and spinach. Add an apple and milk on the side for breakfast on the go.

Morning Snack

- Whole Grain Crackers, a cheese stick and an orange are an easy snack between classes.

Lunch

- Nutty banana sandwich made with 2 slices of whole grain bread, 2 Tablespoons nut butter and sliced banana. Add carrot sticks and a yogurt parfait with berries to round out your meal.

Pre Practice/Game Snack

- About an hour before, try a turkey roll up: 2 oz of sliced turkey and a slice of cheese on a tortilla.

Dinner

- 4-ounce pork chop with a large baked potato topped with steamed broccoli and shredded cheese. Enjoy a small side salad and glass of milk on the side.

Post Practice/Game Snack

- Within 30-45 minutes have a low fat or fat free chocolate milk and a handful of almonds to help with recovery.

**Drink milk with meals
and water in between!**



Macros to MyPlate

Macronutrients, or macros, are the three parts of food that the body uses for energy: carbohydrates, protein and fat. Each is essential for the body.

What is protein? Protein helps build, repair and maintain muscle.

What is a carbohydrate? Carbs are the preferred energy source of the body and brain. Carbs come in 2 forms – complex and simple. Complex carbs are long lasting energy that break down slowly in the body. Simple carbs are quick acting energy and should be eaten less frequently. They can be helpful in providing quick energy right before or during exercise. At least half of the calories that are consumed should come from complex carbohydrates.

What is a fat? Healthy fats help absorb certain vitamins and provide energy. The healthiest fats will be liquid at room temperature. Fat also helps with satiety or the feeling of fullness.

Most foods contain more than one macronutrient.

A balanced diet that typically looks like MyPlate will contain the right amount of macros your body needs.

Choose high quality complex carbohydrate foods more frequently, like whole grains, low fat dairy, fruits and vegetables. Limit simple carbohydrates like sugars and white bread.

Foods like beans and legumes, low fat dairy and whole grains contain both protein and carbohydrates. Choose these foods more often.



Foods like nuts, nut butter, ribeye and chicken thighs are high in protein but also fat. Choose lower fat proteins like chicken breast, pork or beef round or loin more often.



