

Nutritional Tips for Athletes

1. **Drink up!!** Inadequate fluids can make you feel weak, sore and tired. Drink 12-16 ounces of water before exercising. Even a 2-percent reduction in your total body fluid will increase your effort level during exercise (and decrease your performance). Drink it in sips an hour before, not all at once or that will cause a cramp or side stitch. Remember fruits and vegetables have water in them so consuming them throughout the day will help keep you hydrated.
2. **Eat Light and Often!!** Feeling full, empty, or nauseous will keep you from maximizing your energy, so you can't afford to eat the wrong foods at the wrong time. Having a carbohydrate snack in the last 2 hours before exercise is critical. The best choices are low fiber and lactose free foods, to prevent intestinal problems. Bananas, energy bars, bagels, pretzels, rice cakes and sports drinks are good examples.
3. **Watch Out for the Humidity!!** When you exercise on hot, humid days, you sweat up to 2 liters or more per hour. Keep up with your fruits and vegetables. You may want to drink Gatorade. It will help replenish the salt you lose while exercising and stay energized. I sometimes water some down because it can seem too sweet.
4. **Avoid Dairy Products Too Close To Exercising!** You should not have dairy (milk, eggs, yogurt, etc.) three to four hours before exercise. This will help avoid cramps.
5. **Recovery/Building Phase**
Your muscles break down during a workout leaving you with tiny tears. It is important to refuel, build and repair those muscles. Within 30 minutes after you exercise try to consume 50-100 grams of carbohydrates and 20-35 grams of protein. Sports drinks do contain carbohydrates, so check the amount that is in the drink. Protein Shakes are a good source for protein. Eat sensibly. Now is not a good time for junk food!