



BIGTIME NUTRITION FOR ATHLETIC DEVELOPMENT

Besides genetics and sports training, no single factor plays a bigger role in the quality of an athlete's performance than a proper diet. Even though there is a wealth of information available, very little of this describes the nutritional needs and the best dietary regimen for training and competing athletes.

When eating for competition, the key is to eat foods that will fuel your performance. The foods that are eaten 1-3 days before competition are what the body calls upon to perform. The importance of eating a balanced diet everyday of the week cannot be underestimated. This is the only way to expect to have the fuels needed for performance.

If an athlete learns more about nutrition and what benefits can be gained by eating the right foods they can improve their performance dramatically. Finding the right combination for athletic development is essential to success!

The main difference between a training diet and a regular diet is normally in total caloric intake, and total caloric intake of carbohydrates. The carbohydrate intake has to be higher because muscles use carbohydrate as a primary fuel source. Training diets include more foods from the grains, fruits, and vegetable groups.

A good diet still needs to include the other major nutrients of protein, fat, vitamins, minerals, and water. You should be able to get enough of these from eating a variety of foods from the major food groups.

The other difference between a diet used for athletic development and one for weight loss is the number of total calories. A person training for athletic development will usually be expending a lot more energy and thus getting rid of more calories. This makes it necessary for athletes to eat more to replenish nutrients and avoid fatigue.

Many people feel that supplements will increase their performance. That is only partially true. Supplements can help, but mostly when you are not getting enough of the nutrients from your diet. If your diet is supplying the needed nutrients then the supplements will do little good. The body will get rid of all excess nutrients or else it will store the nutrients as fat. If you are not getting enough fuel and nutrients, and supplements are needed, then changes in eating habits need to be made.

Why do I need all major nutrients and what benefits do I get from them?

Why Carbohydrates?

Carbohydrates are the main source of energy for the muscles, red blood cells and central nervous system. Carbohydrate spares protein from being used as energy. It also aids in the burning of fat.

Why protein?

Protein is found throughout the body. It is necessary to build all body cells. Since cells are being replaced continually, protein is needed throughout life.

Why fat?

Fat is a concentrated source of energy from food. It provides more than twice as much energy as protein and carbohydrates. It supplies essential fatty acids and it carries vitamins A, D, E, and K. It is also part of cell walls.

Are vitamins important?

Vitamins help control the growth of all body tissues. They are also essential for the release of energy in the body. They are essential for normal cell operations. Yes, they are important.

What are minerals?

Minerals are important for body structure and for controlling body processes. Common ones are calcium, phosphorus, iodine, iron, magnesium, and zinc.

Why is water so important?

Many athletes don't know that water is a nutrient. One of the most important functions of water is that it works as a coolant to keep you from overheating.