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## Building Your Nutritional Foundation

*"I just feel tired and slow. I want to be faster and more explosive, but in reality, I can hardly get through practice."*

- Soccer Player

*"I've been working hard in the weight room, and I am not getting stronger."*

- Football Player

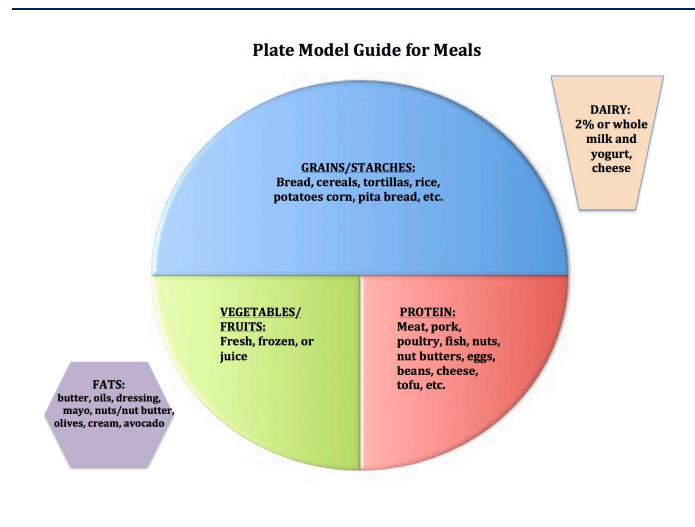
There is no question that nutrition plays a key role in improving sports performance. A good sports performance diet can be a powerful solution for safely and naturally improving your energy, endurance, speed, reaction time, and recovery. In the world of competitive sports, where winning and losing may come down to milliseconds, athletes need to examine all areas to see where they can improve. Research is in agreement that certain nutrition strategies – whether it is starting the day with breakfast or grabbing the right combination of foods for recovery, have tangible performance benefits.

Are you wondering what you should be eating before, during, and after a workout? Well, before we get to that, it's essential we discuss how to build your "Nutritional Foundation." Grabbing a healthy pre workout snack, won't help, if there are holes in the rest of your diet!

Your "Nutritional Foundation" is the most important aspect of your sports performance diet. Key aspects of this foundation, include **balance, volume, quality, timing, and consistency**.

**BALANCE:** Are all food groups represented when eating?

Below is a representation of Plate Model – a model of what your plate should look like – specifically designed for athletes.



### Starches/Grains - 50% of plate

- Choose whole grain options when possible: whole wheat bread (3 grams fiber/slice), bran cereal (Kashi Heart or Heart or Kashi 7 Grain Flakes), whole wheat wraps, whole wheat waffles/pitas/rolls/buns
- Fiber should be at least 25 g/day - will need more as total calories increase.
- This is an essential component of your sports diet, and should be ~50% of your intake.

### Proteins – 25% of plate:

- Aim for a variety of proteins such as: chicken, turkey, tuna, fish, shellfish, grass fed beef (\*contains iron), Buffalo burger, beans, tofu, cheeses, cottage cheese, Greek yogurt

### Fruits/Vegetables – 25% of plate:

- Aim for 5-7 servings total per day
- Aim for color with each meal
- Skins/peels contain the most fiber
- Use as much variety as possible: blueberries, blackberries, cantaloupe, watermelon, pineapple, apple, banana, orange, tangerine



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**Fats – foods cooked with fats:**

- Choose monounsaturated fats such as avocado, nuts, olive oil, flaxseed
- Watch portions which can add calories quickly - 1/4 cup nuts is 1 serving = 1 golf ball!)

**Dairy**

- Choose dairy sources such as low fat milk and cheeses.
- Aim for 3-4 servings/day

**VOLUME:** *Does your diet contain enough calories, fat, protein to meet the demands of your sport?*

The energy demands of training will vary from day to day, depending on the intensity and duration of the training sessions, as well as how often you are training.

For low to moderate expenditure, aim for “3 + 2;” that is, 3 meals + 2 snacks. For higher intensity sports like football, soccer, and cross country, “3 + 3” might be necessary, which is 3 meals + 3 snacks. Snacks are an essential component to your sports diet, and together with 3 meals, will allow you to keep your metabolism working from the time you wake up to the time you go to bed. Adding snacks can give you an extra boost of energy and can help you meet your weight goals.

**TIMING:** *Are you eating regularly throughout the day?*

When following a 3 meals + 2-3 snack plan, this translates to an athlete eating every 3-4 hours, which is optimal for keeping the metabolism firing, keeping blood sugar stable, providing energy to the muscles, helping to fuel pre and post workouts, and providing fuel for your brain. Eating regularly has been associated not only with enhanced sports performance, but also improved mood, energy, and concentration.

**HIGH QUALITY:** *Are you eating minimally processed and whole foods?*

The food you are eating should be **nutrient dense**. This maximizes your vitamin, mineral, fiber and antioxidant consumption. Extra vitamins and minerals can help your body work more efficiently and recover faster. Key nutrients....iron, calcium, etc. Look for **whole foods versus processed foods**, as these foods tend to have the most nutrients per bite. Enjoy different foods, variety\*\*\*? For example, a grilled chicken breast is healthier than chicken nuggets because chicken nuggets have been processed, breaded and fried. Another example would be to choose sweet potatoes or white potatoes over French fries or potato chips, which have been deep fried.



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**CONSISTENCY:** *Are you more or else following the same protocol regularly?*

Help ignite your metabolism by eating consistently and more often throughout the day. Consistency is essential for being a competitive athlete. Eating regular meals, and including snacks, is essential for keeping your energy levels up and your metabolism working.

**VARIETY:** *Do you tend to eat the same foods for breakfast and/or lunch and/or dinner?*

Variety of foods day to day ensures that you are getting a variety of nutrients in your diet. For example, oranges are very high in Vitamin C. If you only ate oranges every day, you would be missing out on getting enough Potassium. Similarly, if you only ate chicken and never ate red meat, your diet might be insufficient in iron, since chicken contains little to no iron. If you find that you are “always eating the same thing” brainstorm on new foods or go shopping with your parents and explore new foods. This also helps to keep food fun!

## **80/20**

Follow these guidelines most of the time – 80%

Allow yourself to live a little! ~20%