



Eat to Perform

Be at your best! Athletic performance is fuelled by desire and by a healthy body. And what fuels a healthy body is **good nutrition!**

You are what you eat...

- An athlete's food affects his or her performance
- Nutritious food provides energy during activity, and helps the body to repair, build and grow muscles after the activity is over.

Staying healthy on the road...

Planning ahead is important especially if you are not sure what types of food facilities will be available. It's especially important for athletes to have foods that they tolerate well on the day of the event.

As Recreational Facilities begin to provide more healthy food choices, athletes will be more confident in being able to access healthy foods while they travel. You may want to call ahead to see what you can purchase on site. If the facility does not offer foods you wish to eat, you can bring things from home.

Here are some suggestions of healthy foods for competition days:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water • Sandwiches or wraps • Macaroni salad • Fresh vegetables and fruit • Dried fruit • Peanut butter • Nuts and seeds • Dry cereal | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bagels • Fruit-filled cookies • Plain cookies • Crackers • Boiled eggs • 100% fruit/vegetable juices and bars |
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Staying healthy on the road...eating away from home:

You **can** make healthy choices when eating out at recreation facilities or restaurants! Here are some tips:



- Stick to regular or kid-sized meals instead of super-sized meals.
- Choose water, milk or 100% fruit/vegetable juice to drink.
- Look for healthy choice menu items such as:
 - grilled chicken or fish
 - baked potato
 - wraps
 - low-fat deli sandwiches
 - fruit and yogurt cups
 - green salad
 - pasta with tomato or meat sauce
- Ask questions about how food is prepared. Foods that are baked, broiled, grilled, poached, steamed or roasted are healthier choices than fried foods.
- Limit high fat extras such as cheese sauces, salad dressings, mayonnaise, gravy, butter and sour cream. Ask for sauces and dressings to be put on the side.

Fuelling your body...

Athletes need lots of energy! That means getting enough **calories** from food every day. Athletes need to eat 3 meals plus several snacks every day. *Canada's Food Guide* (www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide) shows how much food to eat from each of the four food groups depending on how old the athlete is and whether they are a boy or a girl.

The main fuel that the body uses during exercise is **carbohydrates**. This comes from foods like grain products (breads, rice, pasta), vegetables and fruits. The body stores some carbohydrate in the form of "muscle glycogen" to provide energy during exercise. But the amounts of muscle glycogen are small, and these energy stores are reduced if an activity lasts longer than 90 minutes. Athletes need to eat high carbohydrate foods after exercise to replace their glycogen stores.

Protein helps athletes repair muscle tissues after exercise. Research shows that most athletes do not require extra protein – they just need to eat a balanced diet by following Canada's Food Guide. If they eat enough calories to meet their energy needs they will also be getting enough protein.

Fat is a source of energy and important vitamins. Healthier fats include vegetable oils, soft (non-hydrogenated) margarines, lower fat milk products, and lean cuts of meat, fish and poultry.

Variety is very important! The larger the variety of healthy foods that an athlete eats, the more likely they are to get all the **vitamins and minerals** they need.

What to Drink?

- **Water** is the best fluid during exercise. Athletes need lots of water before, during and after exercise to avoid dehydration. Whether indoors or outdoors, athletes need to have water available at all times.
- **Sports drinks** are designed to be a carbohydrate and sodium replacement and are not needed during light exercise. They are recommended only if an athlete is exercising continuously (with heavy sweating) for over an hour, or in very hot and humid conditions
- **Energy drinks** can actually harm athletic performance. The high sugar and caffeine content of many energy drinks can cause dehydration, increased heart rate, mild diarrhea and insomnia.

	Before Activity	During Activity	After Activity
What to Eat	Meals (2-4 hours before): Pasta with meat sauce, fruit, milk. Soup & sandwich made with lean meat, milk OR Snacks (1-2 hours before): Yogurt with fruit and granola. Muffin, fruit, milk.	Sports drinks or fresh orange slices will provide fuel to keep going when activity lasts longer than 60 minutes.	Soon after, re-fuel with: Baked potato, chili, green salad, oatmeal cookie, milk. Bagel with peanut butter, juice. Cereal with milk and fruit.
What to Drink	Drink 400-600 mL of fluid two or three hours before activity. Drink 200-300 mL, 15-30 minutes before.	Drink 150-350 mL of fluid every 15-20 minutes.	Drink fluids to satisfy your thirst.



For more information on what an athlete needs to drink, see the additional handout with this kit, titled: Beverages for Health and Sports.

For more information about nutrition for athletes, visit the Coaching Association of Canada website (www.coach.ca/eng/nutrition/index.cfm)

The section on Sports Nutrition has advice from sports dietitians on many different topics.