

# SportsNutrition

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## The Athlete's Kitchen

The American Dietetic Association (the nation's largest group of food and nutrition professionals) recently convened in Boston. The following are just a few of the highlights from that meeting. Perhaps the information will help you enjoy a high energy, health-promoting sports diet.

- While *cholesterol* used to be the buzz word regarding heart disease, *inflammation* is the current focus. Dr. Britt Burton-Freeman of the National Center for Food Safety and Technology spoke about the power of food on reducing inflammation and lowering the risk of the so-called diseases of aging (that are actually diseases of inflammation). Obesity, for example, is a pro-inflammatory condition. This helps explain why obesity is associated with inflammatory diseases such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes, Alzheimer's, arthritis, and pulmonary diseases.

How can you reduce inflammation? By eating at each meal a colorful rainbow of fruits and vegetables rich in bioactive compounds. This would offer your body continual protection and could potentially reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke by 20%, and cancer and diabetes by 30%. Red strawberries, blueberries, dark purple grapes (or grape juice), oranges, and leafy greens are just a few examples of colorful foods that fight inflammation.

Nuts are also powerfully health protective. Dr. Michelle Wien of Loma Linda University reported that people who eat two ounces (46) almonds a day can significantly reduce the risk of heart disease and diabetes. And more is better! No, you will not get fat eating nuts. The trick is to exchange other snacks (such as cookies or cheese & crackers) for almonds. Note: 23 almonds = about 160 calories

Plan to enjoy almonds with carbs, such as with dried fruit, or as almond butter on toast. This reduces the blood glucose response of the carbohydrates with which they are eaten. This helps stabilize blood glucose swings that can contribute to inflammation. (Plus, carb-protein combinations contribute to sustained energy that gets you through a busy day and a hard workout, as well as optimizes recovery from workouts.) Almonds are a good source of magnesium, a mineral protective against heart disease and diabetes. Bottom line: enjoy almonds (and other nuts) daily!

- If you are fond of pistachio nuts, buy them in the shell. You'll be less likely to over-eat them! Keep the empty shells in plain sight (as compared to discarding the empty shells into a waste basket where you don't see them). The pile of empty shells becomes a visual clue you've eaten plenty!
- Most dieters believe the less they eat, the more fat they will lose. Not always true. A study compared obese people who were given 1,200-calorie (for women) and 1,600-calorie (for men) reducing diets. A comparison group was given diets with about 1,750 calories (women) and 2,100 calories (men). Both groups lost the same amount of weight—even though one group ate about 500 more calories per day. Conclusion: Why suffer needless deprivation when you can achieve weight loss success with a higher calorie level?
- Many athletes who want to lose weight restrict chocolate,

## Nutrition News from the American Dietetic Association

thinking it's fattening. In a weight reduction study, overweight women enjoyed a daily dark chocolate snack as a part of their "discretionary calories" in a reduced-calorie diet. They lost the same amount of weight as the comparison group who ate no chocolate. The researchers concluded a daily dose of dark chocolate does not interfere with weight reduction and may reduce cravings for sweets. *Woohoo!!!*

- Given two-thirds of Americans are overweight or obese, you likely have friends or relatives who have Type II (adult onset) diabetes. To help resolve their confusion about what to eat, encourage them to explore *The Healthy Diabetes Plate Website* ([www.extension.uidaho.edu/diabetesplate](http://www.extension.uidaho.edu/diabetesplate)). It is an excellent interactive tool for planning balanced meals. Athletes can also benefit from the info; just eat double!

- If you want to lose weight, try to make sleep a priority. A survey of 772 college students suggests those who slept less than seven hours a night had a significantly higher Body Mass Index than those who slept more than seven hours. This association was strongest among the female students.

- Another sleep-related study with healthy adults suggests sleep deprivation is associated with increased hunger and the potential to overeat. Without doubt, sleep is helpful for a successful weight management program.

- One way to lose weight is to go on an Eco-Friendly Diet that saves calories as well as the environment. Here's how: buy fewer foods and beverages with excess packaging (such as soda, vending items, take-out foods); use exercise as a means of transportation, enjoy local parks for recreation, and support farmers' markets.

- More and more people (including athletes) are following a gluten-free diet. Because this diet is very restrictive, gluten-free eaters need to be educated how to choose balanced meals. "Problem nutrients" that tend to be low in a gluten-free menu include fiber, iron, B-vitamins, and carbohydrates. If you need to go gluten-free, seek help from a local sports dietitian. (Use the referral network at [SCANdpg.org](http://SCANdpg.org).)

- Is vegetarianism a passing fad? No! A three-year follow-up survey of 176 vegetarians suggests 83% were still vegetarian and 11% had become vegan. Only 6% were no longer vegetarian. Among those who ate vegetarian diets for primarily environmental concerns, 100% remained vegetarian, as compared to 91-92% who remained vegetarian if their primary motivation was *health* or *animal rights*, respectively.

- Energy drinks are popularly consumed as a mixer with alcohol (more so than as a way to improve athletic performance). They are associated with negative effects: 41% of student consumers reported "jolt and crash" events; 22% reported heart palpitations. How about perking yourself up with exercise, instead!

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