

Sports Nutrition Top 10 List

#10. Eat breakfast. No excuses! Sit down and enjoy breakfast daily. If it's impossible to have a sit-down meal, grab and go with a cereal bar, muffin, sandwich, peanut butter crackers, yogurt, or fruit.

#9. Eat snacks. Ideally we should snack between every meal, especially if meals are more than 4 hours apart. Snacks supply energy and prevent us from getting so hungry that we overeat at meals.

#8. Eat Slowly. It takes 20 minutes for the "I've eaten enough" message to get from stomach to brain. By eating slowly we decrease our chances of becoming overfull. We'll also enjoy food more!

#7. Carbohydrates = Energy Complex carbohydrates found in fruits, starchy veggies and whole grains provide our bodies with the best type of energy to fuel exercise, and refuel after exercise. We need about 65% of our daily calories from carbohydrate.

#6. More protein does not mean more muscle. Avoid expensive high protein powders and diets. We only need about 15% of calories from protein. This equals daily about 4 servings of dairy products and 3 servings of meats or alternative proteins (fish, eggs, beans, nuts, seeds and tofu). Extra protein won't give us any extra benefit.

#5. Fats are not all bad. Our bodies need about 20% of daily calories from fat. Monounsaturated fats like canola and olive oils are best in terms of their heart-health benefits. Saturated fats from animal sources and some processed foods are less healthy.

#4. Dairy products are not the enemy. Unless you're lactose intolerant or a vegan, dairy products are probably your best bet for calcium. Calcium is essential for prevention of osteoporosis in men and women. Some dairy products contain lots of saturated fat (whole milk cheese) while others don't (skim milk). Calcium sources include yogurt, cow's milk and cheeses, and fortified soy milk and cheeses.

#3. Drink before, during and after exercise. Fluids protect our bodies from dehydration. The more active we are, the more fluids we need. Drink non-alcoholic and caffeine-free beverages for best hydration. By the time we're thirsty we may already be dehydrated. We're well hydrated if our urine is light-colored and odor-free. Dark infrequent urination is a sign of dehydration.

#2. Dietary supplements can't guarantee strength, energy or endurance. Research has not proven a relationship between dietary supplements and athletic performance. Vitamins and minerals don't provide energy because they don't provide calories. Save your money, you'll be better off eating a wide variety of foods. It's important to remember that supplements are not regulated by the FDA, leaving lots of questions about safety, effectiveness and reliability of these products.

#1. Take time to recover from strenuous exercise. Intense activity leaves muscles feeling fatigued. You'll have a better chance of a quicker recovery if you eat (or drink) something high in carbohydrate, along with a little protein, within fifteen minutes after exercising. Try a bowl of cereal and a banana, low-fat cheese in a wrap, or peanut butter crackers and a sports drink. Resting your body is an important part of recovery too.

This provides a brief overview of sports nutrition. To learn about your individual needs, call to schedule a nutrition appointment at the Office of Health Education and Promotion, Health Services at 862-3823.

Or visit us online for more nutrition resources at www.unh.edu/health-services