

POWER


NUTRITION FOR TEEN ATHLETES


Tips from a registered dietitian
and sports nutrition expert





How to **EAT** Before Practice or a Game

Fueling starts hours before activity — or even the night before!

 **THE NIGHT BEFORE:**
Eat a balanced dinner if you have an early-morning game or practice.

 **EARLY IN THE DAY:**
Don't skip breakfast or lunch before afternoon activities.


 **TWO HOURS BEFORE:** Eat a mini-meal with carbs and protein while you have time to digest.


 **GAME TIME:** Choose snacks with 30 to 60 grams of simple carbs that are low in fiber, like applesauce, graham crackers, pretzels, or a sports drink.



HYDRATION BASICS

Drinking consistently helps your body stay ready for activity — don't wait until you feel thirsty.

 Hydrate with water throughout the day and during meals and snacks, then *sip every 5 to 15 minutes* during strenuous activity.

 If you are sweating heavily or wearing full gear (like in football), *consider adding electrolytes* with a salt snack or a sports drink. Regular Gatorade helps during or around intense training with simple sugars for energy and electrolytes for balancing hydration. Gatorade Zero works during the day for electrolytes and hydration if you don't need the extra simple sugars for quick energy all day long.

Remember the **3 Rs** to Recover

Eat a snack after training — your body absorbs nutrients better right after activity.

1

REFUEL

with 30 to 60 grams of carbs.

2

REBUILD

with about 20 grams of protein. Try dairy, hard-boiled eggs, or turkey slices.

3



REHYDRATE

with 16 to 24 ounces of water or fluids with electrolytes.



SLEEP Fuels Performance, Too!

Muscle growth and recovery happen while you sleep.

-  8 to 10 hours per night is essential for recovery, focus, and injury prevention.
-  When your sleep is inconsistent, you miss meals, have lower energy, and poorer training results.

What to Know About SUPPLEMENTS

Food, water, and sleep are the most important performance boosters.

- ➔ Prioritize consistent meals, hydration, and sleep! If these are not on point, a supplement won't make a big difference.
- ➔ Supplements are not one-size-fits-all. If you choose to supplement, work with a Registered Dietitian to select products appropriate for your body and your goals.
- ➔ Always choose products that are NSF Certified for Sport to help confirm the product meets high standards and reduce the risk of consuming banned substances.



WATCH FOR RED-S: Relative Energy Deficiency in Sport

Underfueling leads to fatigue, injuries, and health issues. Don't ignore the warning signs of RED-S, which include:

- Poor recovery
- Missed periods in female athletes
- Mood swings
- Digestive or bone health issues

Coaches and athletes should work with athletic trainers, Registered Dietitians, and other professionals to build a plan that matches nutrition to training and supports overall health.



What About SNACKING?

Snacking gets a bad rap, but athletes need more fuel — snacking can help.

- ➔ Snack with purpose: Pair protein with a whole grain or fruit.
- ➔ Watch for misinformation, like “Don't eat after 8 p.m.” A well-timed evening snack can actually boost recovery.

ENERGY DRINKS: Use Caution

“Energy drinks = energy” is false. They contain caffeine, not fuel.

- ! High levels of caffeine can have side effects like dehydration, heart complications, digestive issues, anxiety, and trouble sleeping.
- ! Caffeine can make you feel more alert but does not give you true energy like food does.
- ✓ Focus on getting energy from food, hydration, and rest.

TALK TO A PRO

Consider connecting with a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist if you want extra help with:

- **A plant-based diet:** It's doable, but hitting protein goals takes some planning.
- **Building muscle:** It takes strategy and patience.
- **Navigating supplements:** Get advice on what's safe and what's hype.

Meet the Expert



Kileigh Job, M.S., RD, CDN teaches sports nutrition at Russell Sage, where she also earned her master's in Nutrition and Dietetics. She was a competitive gymnast and now works with Division I student-athletes as a campus dietitian at a nearby college, is a nutrition coach for high school athletes nationwide through IMG Academy, and runs Upstate NY Nutrition, her private practice.

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PERFORM

MENTAL HEALTH FOR TEEN ATHLETES

Tips from a psychologist specializing in sports and a baseball coach with a master's in sport science



Show Up For **YOURSELF**

People usually assume you're fine. If you are not OK, be your own advocate and speak up about what is going on in your body and mind.

- ➔ Don't push through pain just to look strong or prove something.
- ➔ Pushing hard all the time can lead to perfectionism and burnout. Give your best — but not everything.
- ➔ Speaking of perfectionism ... let go of the expectation that perfect is attainable. Nobody's perfect. Not you, not coach, not pro athletes.



KEEP BUILDING YOUR MENTAL GAME

Here are more ways to build mental strength and lead with confidence.

- 🎯 Set goals that grow with you. For example, in weightlifting, instead of trying to lift more than your teammate, focus on lifting more than you did last week.
- 🎯 You don't have to be the star player to lead. Step up by encouraging teammates, showing up on time, and working consistently.
- 🎯 There is more great info online to help you manage your mindset — just double-check it. Ask where it's coming from and whether it can be backed up.

POWER Mindset Moves

These techniques work to help you manage pressure.

- ➔ **Try 4-7-8 breathing to settle your nerves:** Breathe in for 4 counts, hold for 7, breathe out for 8.

- ➔ **How you talk to yourself matters.** Hype yourself up with affirmations like "I've got this" or "I gave my best." And if you wouldn't say it to a teammate, definitely don't say it to yourself.

- ➔ **Instead of comparing yourself to others, compete with yourself.** Aim to be just a little better than you were yesterday.



BOUNCE BACK After a Tough Loss

Loss is part of sports. And it stings. The goal isn't to sugarcoat it, but to grow from it.

- ✳ Be honest about what happened. What did the other team do better? What could you do better next time?
- ✳ Your brain focuses on what went wrong. Use that. Let it fuel smarter choices and better preparation.
- ✳ One mistake or loss doesn't define you. Take a breath and lock in on what's next.



Burnout Builds **SLOWLY**

The good news is you can catch it early and turn it around.

- ➔ Feeling bored with your sport is a burnout warning sign. Hitting a plateau — where you're working hard but not improving — is another common signal.
- ➔ The message that you have to grind through burnout is wrong. Recovery usually means stepping back — maybe taking a day off, going easy on yourself in practice, or shortening a run.
- ➔ Even pros need a reset. You're not weak for needing rest. You're smart for catching it early.

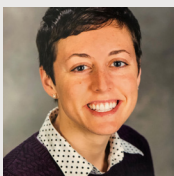
Plan to Pull Back, **EVENTUALLY**

Leaving a sport is a big deal that every athlete faces eventually, and it deserves more attention than it gets.

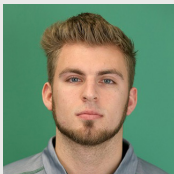


- ➔ *Stepping away from sport might happen as you're starting college — or as you're graduating — adding one big life change on top of another. Give yourself compassion.*
- ➔ *You've likely been an athlete most of your life. It's going to feel weird or sad to stop.*
- ➔ *Check in on your Big 4: your mental health, social support, exercise routine, and nutrition. What will movement look like without practice? How will you fuel your body? Who's your support system? Make a plan to stay grounded and healthy.*

Meet the Experts



Kristiana Feeser, Ph.D. is an assistant professor of sports science at Russell Sage College and an applied psychologist with expertise in mental health for student-athletes. She is a former NCAA Division I swimmer.



Sean Berry teaches physical education and is head varsity baseball coach in the Waterford-Halfmoon Union Free School District. He holds a B.S. in Physical Education and an M.S. in Sport Science: Coaching and Mental Performance from Russell Sage, where he played varsity baseball.

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TRAINING, RECOVERY, AND INJURY PREVENTION FOR TEEN ATHLETES

Tips from a physical therapist
and from a certified athletic trainer

Begin with Sleep, Food, AND FOCUS

Performance starts with how you care for yourself outside of practice and games.

- ➔ Aim for 8-10 hours of sleep. It supports recovery, helps prevent injuries, and boosts your academic game, too!
- ➔ Don't skip meals or take shortcuts with supplements or processed protein products. Real food, like pretzels before a workout or a sandwich after, is essential.
- ➔ Stay hydrated. Plain water does the job.
- ➔ Routines help reduce stress and mental fatigue. Build time management skills to balance school, sports, and all the rest.
- ➔ Show up with appropriate footwear, protective equipment, and other gear, as well as your essential items, like inhalers and EpiPens.



MASTER THE PUSHUP

Pushups are Coach Lauren's favorite move for building full-body strength (and strength is an important part of injury prevention.)

- ✔ Start with a wall pushup: Stand upright and push off a wall to build initial control.
- ✔ Move to an incline pushup with a sturdy surface like a desk or bench.
- ✔ Avoid the knee pushup! Try a higher incline instead to engage your core better.
- ✔ Advance to a floor pushup: Keep your body in a straight line as you lower your chest to the floor.
- ✔ No head wobbles, no worm moves: Keep your head up and your body flat (you should be able to balance something on your back!)



CONCUSSIONS Are Serious

Everyone should be concussion-aware — athletes, parents, and coaches.

➔ **Always report hits to the head, even if you feel fine.** Symptoms can appear hours or days later.

➔ **Watch for dizziness, headache, blurred vision, light sensitivity, nausea, or trouble concentrating.**

➔ **Technique matters.** Learning the right form and progressing slowly — whether you're heading a soccer ball, tackling, or trying a new skill — helps reduce risk.

➔ **The Brain Injury Association of New York State** has helpful resources for athletes, coaches, and parents.

bianys.org/concussion-information

WARM UP, COOL DOWN, and Remember Rest

Stay safe and strong with the right moves before and after the game.

- ➔ Toe-touch circles are great for team bonding, but use dynamic warmups that mimic the movements of your sport to physically prep for activity.
- ➔ Static stretching (hold for 60 seconds), foam rolling, and light activity help with recovery after workouts and on rest days.
- ➔ Full recovery days keep your body fresh and your game sharp. Reviewing plays by watching game film can be more effective than another day on the field.



Scan the QR code for demonstration videos from our expert!



sage.edu/athlete-tips



Meet the Experts



Marci Murphy, ATC, CSCS is an assistant professor who teaches anatomy and physiology and exercise physiology labs in Russell Sage College's health sciences programs. She is interested in strength and conditioning and sports nutrition and is a certified athletic trainer with experience working with high school and college athletes.



Lauren Tourtellott PT, DPT, CSCS is an assistant professor in Russell Sage's Doctor of Physical Therapy program and a physical therapist with board certification in neurology. She's a high school soccer coach, former Division I student-athlete, and the 2024 New York State Physical Therapist of the Year.

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