

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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