

# Sports Nutrition for Student Athletes

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Student athletes encounter many challenges during their season. Busy schedules often result in skipped meals or snacks and eating on the run. Late nights doing homework limit sleep before another morning workout. Athletes in weight-related sports often focus on “dieting” and consume too few calories to fuel their workouts. As a result, many suffer from impaired concentration and limited energy, performance and recovery. If you’re a student athlete or have one in your household, use the following guidelines to develop a more optimal sports nutrition plan.

## Don’t skip breakfast

Skipping breakfast is common among student athletes, but starting the day with a good breakfast is the key to maintaining optimal energy and achieving ideal weight. Eating a balanced breakfast increases metabolism, improves concentration and provides energy for the morning hours. If time is an issue, try one of the following quick and portable breakfast combinations:

- Whole grain bagel with peanut butter, banana and milk
- Yogurt smoothie with a whole grain cereal bar
- Instant oatmeal (buy prepared cups and add boiling water) with fruit and milk
- Breakfast burrito (heat in microwave and go) with orange juice
- Yogurt parfait (yogurt, fruit and cereal in a cup)

## Eat a Balanced Lunch

Many of my student athlete clients use lunch break as a “social hour”, instead of fueling their bodies for afternoon classes and sports practice. They report feeling uncomfortable consuming a balanced lunch, while friends graze on fries, chips and sweets. When they complain of low energy and trouble getting through practice, I explain that eating a balanced lunch will help solve these issues. For a balanced lunch, include foods from each of the following groups:

Starches/Grains	Meat/Protein	Fruits/Vegs	Milk/Dairy
Bread/Pita	Lunchmeat / Tuna	Raw Veggies	Milk
Pasta	Chicken/fish	Steamed veggies	Parmesan cheese
Tortilla	Beans	Salsa	Shredded cheese
Bagel	Peanut butter	Banana	Chocolate milk
Pizza	Canadian bacon	Pineapple/Tomato	Cheese
Bun	Chicken burger	Tomato/lettuce	Cheese

### **Plan a pre-workout snack**

Athletes should eat every 3-4 hours to maintain promote optimal energy. Planning a pre-event snack can help athletes sustain energy throughout their practice session. Students can either purchase snacks at school or bring them from home. Here are some suggestions for healthy pre-event snacks that will provide long-term energy:

- Yogurt parfait (also available to Starbucks and McDonalds)
- String cheese and whole grain crackers
- Energy bar and yogurt smoothie
- Peanut butter crackers and milk
- Fresh fruit and bag of mixed nuts
- ½ peanut butter sandwich and fruit

### **Eat a balanced dinner**

Many athletes experience a decreased appetite after a hard workout, and prefer to graze on snacks instead of eating a balanced dinner. This can limit both nutrition and recovery. Involve student athletes in the meal planning process and allow them to help select menu choices. They often have higher calories needs than the rest of the family, so include plenty of carbohydrate-rich options. (especially in families where people are following low-carbohydrate diets for weight loss). For a balanced dinner, include 1-2 servings from each of the following food groups:

<b>Starches/Grains</b>	<b>Meat/Protein</b>	<b>Fruits/Vegs</b>	<b>Milk/Dairy</b>
Bread/Pita	Lunchmeat	Raw Veggies	Milk
Pasta	Meatballs	Tomato Sauce	Parmesan cheese
Tortilla	Beans/chicken	Salsa	Shredded cheese
Bagel	Peanut butter	Banana	Chocolate milk
Pizza	Canadian bacon	Pineapple/Tomato	Cheese
Bun	Chicken/Beef Burger	Tomato/Lettuce	Sliced Cheese
Rice	Chicken	Steamed Veggies	Milk

### **Fuel and hydrate during workouts**

Student athletes need to maintain optimal hydration by having water and/or sports drinks available during workouts. Aim to consume about 16-24 ounces of fluid per hour during practices lasting 60 minutes or more. For workouts lasting more than 90 minutes, include a source of carbohydrate in the form of sports drinks, sports bars, gels or high-carbohydrate foods (i.e. fig bars, sliced fruit, sliced bagels, etc.)

**Plan ahead... it's the key**

Student athletes looking for a winning edge should plan ahead for optimal nutrition by focusing on the following strategies:

- Eat a balanced breakfast in the morning or on the way to school
- Pack or purchase a balanced lunch and make time to eat it
- Plan a pre-event snacks and eat it 30-60 minutes before practice
- Hydrate and fuel during activity as recommended
- Eat a balanced dinner to help refuel your body and promote recovery

Best wishes for a safe, healthy and successful season!