

The Power of Food

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The importance of nutrition is not recognized and often overlooked. Food is the most intimate part of our environment because we ingest it. Without food, we would not be living. Nutrition and quality of life are directly related and need to be a top priority. Since we only have one body, we need to take care of it because it cannot be replaced. Food is not only one of life's pleasure's, it is also the most important way to improve and maintain your health.

The quality of food we ingest is the key factor to athletic performance. Many athletes concentrate on body-building, endurance, agility, and speed rather than nutrition. The athletic population needs to realize that nutrition is the solid foundation for those aspects of athletic performance. Nutrition can create the winning edge when it comes time for the last burst of energy in competition.

Nutrition and athletics/exercise benefit the human body in many ways. Together they strengthen the whole body; muscles, nerves, blood, glands, lungs, heart, brain, mind, and mood. The combination will also increase metabolic rate, muscle mass, tissue oxygen uptake, respiratory and circulatory vitality, and increases enzymes in the body that assist in burning fat. An athlete's nutritional needs are far greater when compared to the average person. They need to consume more because they utilize energy throughout the day and during their workout. An athlete's diet should be broken down into four sections.

The first and largest portion of the diet should consist of 65-75% of high performance, unrefined, clean burning complex carbohydrates. Carbohydrates are the primary fuel used and will provide you with the most energy. These foods will open the door to strength and endurance. Some examples are as follows; whole grain breads and pastas, vegetables, brown rice, beans, and fruit.

The next portion of the diet is 20-25% high-grade proteins. This amount should be monitored because too much or too little can put the body off balance. The average person should be getting 1.2 to 1.8 grams per kilogram of body weight. The quality of protein is more important than the quantity. Examples of high-grade proteins are egg whites, poultry, fish, occasional seafood, tofu and other soy products, pork, nuts, and beans. Strength and mass decline if you are NOT ingesting enough proteins and eating excess will put a damper on performance and can gradually overload the kidneys.

About 10-15% of the diet should be energy producing fats and oils necessary for glycogen storage. The best types can be obtained through unrefined, monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats and oils necessary for glycogen storage. Unsaturated fats come from plant products and are "good" fats. Saturated fats come from animal products and can cause cardiovascular disease if eaten in abundance. Sources are olive oil, nuts, low fat cheeses, and whole grain snacks.

The remaining diet should be consisted of liquid nutrients to keep the body properly hydrated. Eight to ten glasses of water should be the minimum an average athlete should intake. Water helps to maintain proper muscle tone by giving muscles their natural ability to contract and by preventing dehydration. The bottom line is that water is the best form of a liquid nutrient.

In conclusion, foods have the ultimate power to influence the way the human machine functions. Nutrition builds you internally and structures you physically and mentally. The point of this article was to make you realize the way nutrition can benefit the whole person, especially the athlete. Just remember that it all begins with a commitment. Stop making excuses and take charge of your health. You will notice and feel the positive changes in your life.

Please look over the "healthy snacks" list for pre and post game. These are only suggestions. Let's try to reinforce the importance of nutrition and athletics! If you have any questions or would like to contact me, please do not hesitate to call or e-mail. My contact information is as follows,

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