Pure Performance
"The Key to my Success"

Did you know that athletes have special nutritional needs?

Optimal nutrition is essential for peak performance. Nutritional misinformation can do as much harm to the ambitious athlete as good nutrition can help.

Coaches, parents, and athletes often look for a "miracle food" to enhance performance. The truth is, there are no special foods or supplements that can help athletes train harder or compete better. What does make a difference is the athlete's overall diet and the timing of the meals. Foods eaten before and after sporting events can make a difference in an athlete's performance.

Quick Facts:

- Athletes achieve peak performance by training and eating a variety of foods.
- Athletes gain most from the amount of carbohydrates stored in the body.
- Fat also provides body fuel; use of fat as fuel depends on the duration of the exercise and the condition of the athlete.
- Exercise may increase the athlete's need for protein.
- Water is a critical nutrient for athletes. Dehydration can cause muscle cramping and fatigue.

Pre-Event Meal Tips:

- Eat 3-4 hours before the event for optimal digestion and energy supply.
- Keep it small-500-1000 calories.
- Select foods high in starch, as this breaks down more easily than proteins & fats.
- The starch should be in the form of complex carbohydrates (breads, cold cereal, pasta, fruits and vegetables) to provide consistent energy.
- Avoid high-sugar foods, as those lead to a rapid rise in blood sugar, followed by a decline in blood sugar and less energy.
- Concentrated sweets can draw fluid into the gastrointestinal tract and contribute to dehydration, cramping, nausea and diarrhea.
- Don't consume any carbohydrates 1 ½ - 2 hours before an event. This may lead to premature exhaustion in endurance events.
- Avoid foods high in fats, fiber and lactose, as they take longer to digest.
- Take in adequate fluids. **Water is the best choice!** Avoid caffeine as it may lead to dehydration by increasing urine production. Drink every 10 to 20 minutes during exercise, even if not thirsty.

Post-Event Meal Tips:

- A small meal eaten within 30 minutes is best!
- Drink plenty of water to replace water lost from sweating.
- The meal should be mixed, containing carbohydrates, protein, and fat. Protein will help replete diminished glycogen stores.
- Fueling up on high carbohydrate foods and beverages soon after an activity will replenish the body and help it recover.
- An easy option is to replenish carbs that you can drink that also contain protein. For example, there are smoothies that provide high protein. Chocolate milk is good.
- Good choices include oranges, bananas, bagels, melon, peanut butter sandwiches, granola or protein bars, apple slices, trail mix, and yogurt with fruit and nuts.

If you have additional questions, please visit your school's Certified Athletic Trainer.

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