

Player Performance Fuel = Nutrition

A primer adapted for the competitive youth athlete
From Mark Verstegen's "Every Day is Game Day"
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Our athletes are fueling their bodies to perform, to recover, and to win. They need to have the energy to stay mentally focused and physically strong. They need to boost their immune system and speed the recovery process. How they eat impacts their brain's ability to function, perhaps the most important variable in performance and definitely key to their academic aptitude. The ideal fuel or nutrients, do not magically appear in their bodies; they come from food.

Build the student-athlete's plate with the following guide:

FUEL = carbohydrates that provide sustainable energy;

BUILD = lean proteins that provide the body's ability to repair and recover;

PROTECT = healthy fats that decrease inflammation and nourish the brain;

PREVENT = colorful fruits and vegetables that provide the fiber, vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and enzymes needed for repair and immune function;

HYDRATE = water that replenishes; consume ½ to 1 oz per pound of body weight per day (160 lb athlete = 5 to 10 pints of water).

Fueling Strategy:

-View food as fuel

Think of food as what powers and sustains the athlete.

-Hit 80/20

Choose foods that are the best for the athlete 80% of the time and incorporate some foods that may not be the best (but are yummy), 20% of the time.

-Fuel with minimally processed carbohydrates

Carbs are the fuel for the body's gas tank. Here, think 'brown and close to the ground' a reference both to the color of the carb and where the food was grown.

-Power with lean proteins

Athletes require at least 1 gram of protein per pound of body weight per day. A cup of milk (8 grams) or an egg (6 grams) are easy references; chicken, fish, lean pork/beef, tofu, cottage cheese, etc. will do the trick.

-Eat fats that give back

Healthy fats are found in nuts (a great snack), fish, and avocados, plus more!

-Eat a rainbow of fruits and vegetable colors

The athlete's plate should have a variety of color coming from multiple food sources. Here are some examples: **Red** (heart health) cherries, beets, tomatoes; **Blue/purple** (circulation) blueberries, plums, eggplant; **White** (immune system) garlic, onions, cauliflower; **Green** (musculature) kiwi, broccoli, spinach; **Yellow** (brain function) pineapple, yellow peppers, star fruit; **Orange** (skin and eye health) carrots, oranges, sweet potatoes.

-Eat breakfast every day

The athlete's body has been fasting since they went to bed; so 'break the fast'! Try to eat some of the above food sources within 30 minutes of waking up to jump-start the metabolism and fuel the brain.

-Meet foundational hydration needs

Our bodies are ~80% water, which needs to be constantly replenished in order to achieve a healthy body composition. Do not replace water with inferior beverages such as soda or sports drinks. Also, don't drink calories. The athlete can check their hydration level by looking at their urine (seriously). If it is clear or pale lemonade color, they are hydrated. If it is darker apple juice color, they are dehydrated.

-Stay hydrated during activity

Losing 2% of body weight due to fluid loss will decrease performance. Cramping is associated with electrolyte loss, specifically sodium loss. Here, sports drinks may be OK such as choosing a hydration beverage with 200 milligrams of sodium per 8 ounces. Here's a water consumption plan: **Pre-training** (1 to 2 hours before), drink 17 to 20 ounces; **Immediately before training**, drink 7 to 10 ounces; **During training** (every 15 minutes), drink 7 to 10 ounces; **Post-training**, drink 20 ounces for every pound lost.

-Fuel for the activity

Eat something before a training session to maximize the athlete's performance and start off fueled. The focus should be on carbohydrates (fuel) with a little bit of protein (build).

-Refuel and rebuild after the training session/game/race

After a workout, the athlete's body is in a state of breaking down and screaming for nutrients. The next step is to get it into a rebuilding state. Ideally, recovery fueling should begin to occur within 10 to 30 minutes after a workout. Athletes train to get stronger, fitter, more powerful, and more efficient, but without post-workout nutrition they will be missing an opportunity to maximize their adaptation to training and may not reach their full potential. Meals should contain a combination of carbohydrates and protein.

50 Top Athlete Performance Power Foods:

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| Almonds | Cinnamon | Hemp seeds | Pumpkin |
| Artichokes | Citrus fruits | Kale | Quinoa |
| Avocados | Coconut | Kefir | Rosemary |
| Beef | Collard greens | Kiwi | Salmon |
| Beans | Dark chocolate | Lentils | Sardines |
| Beets | Edamame | Oats | Spinach |
| Berries | Eggs | Olive oil | Sweet potatoes |
| Broccoli | Farro | Oregano | Swiss chard |
| Brussels sprouts | Flaxseeds | Oysters | Thyme |
| Buffalo | Garlic | Parsley | Turmeric |
| Cherries | Ginger | Pecans | Walnuts |
| Chia seeds | Greek yogurt | Pistachios | |
| | Green tea | Pomegranates | |

Fuel Up!