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Practical Nutrition Tips

from L.A.DiBiase

"I didn't have time to eat breakfast."

How often have you heard that said or even made that statement yourself? You jump out of bed, run to work or school, and then it hits; that light feeling in your head or your stomach is growling in class.

I was working out the other day, when an athlete complained of being tired, the trainer asked if he had had breakfast and you can guess where I am going with this, breakfast is key! This is the meal that gets you going and sets the tone for your day. If you skip it, your body will be playing catch up all day to get the energy it needs for your workouts. If you choose to eat a high fat and high sugar breakfast, (donuts, Danish, or a snickers bar) you will pay for that in a drop in blood sugar later and a lot of wasted calories. Ideally your breakfast should be a combination of protein and carbohydrates. So even if you overslept and are running out the door-here are some suggestions so you can start your day off fueling well. A nutri-grain bar, or a cereal bar, a piece of fruit, and a glass of milk will get you going. A peanut butter and banana sandwich and a glass of milk will offer you proteins and a good carbohydrates choice. Last night's leftover vegetable pizza, an apple, and some milk are easy to eat in the car or on the bus. A container of yogurt, some dry cereal in a baggy and a juice. A pita stuffed with cottage cheese, some grapes and strawberries. Okay, there are five suggestions to get you through the hectic week. Be creative with other choices and you will find your energy level will be higher and you will be less tempted to reach for those donuts once you get to school or work.

Portion Size

Here are a couple of words that should be of importance - "PORTION SIZE". It seems in our super size culture, the concept of a "healthy" portion size has been lost. Some people are not even aware of what a normal serving size should be. If you have been trying to lose a few extra pounds and have been eating whole foods, drinking lots of water, and exercising, but the pounds are still there- it might just be how much you are eating that is keeping the weight on. By adjusting your portion size and what's on your plate you may see those extra pounds coming off.



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Here is a list of common foods and what a portion size looks like. A slice of bread or pancake looks like a CD. A 3 oz. portion of meat or chicken should look like a deck of cards. Half of a bagel is the size of a large to go coffee lid, ½ cup of fruit or vegetables looks like a baseball, a serving of pasta is the size of a tennis ball, and a 2T serving of peanut butter looks like a ping pong ball. So check your plate the next time you sit down to a meal and see if these are your portion sizes.

Sports drinks, which are the best?

According to the Journal Of the American Dietetic Association, "Consumption of sports drinks containing carbohydrates and electrolytes during exercise will provide fuel for the muscles, help maintain blood glucose and the thirst mechanism, decrease the risk of dehydration or hyponatremia". (JAM DIET ASSOC. 2000,100.1,1543-1556). Yes, sports drinks have been shown to enhance performance in exercises lasting over an hour or in special situations of very intense exercise lasting less than an hour.

Do you need a sports drink with your lunch or as just something to grab from the vending machine? No! To quench your thirst if you are not exercising, reach for water, milk, or juice.

Here are my recommendations for when to use a sports drink: If you are running, biking, swimming in the early morning and you have not eaten, a sports drink containing 4-8% carbohydrates is a good way to maintain blood glucose and muscle glycogen. Since you are supposed to be hydrating, a sports drink will accomplish that and give you needed carbohydrates. If your workout is longer than an hour you should be taking in 30-60g of carbohydrates per hour and drinking 6-12 ounces of fluid every 15-20 minutes, so again sports drinks are good to use. When you are finished and you need to replenish your stores-again a sports drink is the way to go. There are varieties out there; sports electrolyte replacements drinks, carbohydrate loading drinks, and recovery drinks. Before and during your workouts the first two should be used, save the recovery drinks that usually contain protein for post workout consumption. Experiment with different types during your training-remember nutrition is part of the training plan.

“Motivation is a fire from within. If someone else tries to light that fire under you, chances are it will burn very briefly.”



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You want to spend time training to get better? Start with this amazing 10 minute exercise:

PACK YOUR LUNCH.

For athletes, the recovery and regeneration time (between workouts) vital to their training progress and performance. That being said, it is important to take control what we eat and when we eat to ensure that our body is getting proper nutrients for recovery. No breakfast and a bad lunch on a school day guarantees poor performance. It may not be "cool" to carry your Sponge Bob lunchbox to school but no one will be laughing at your increased performance on the field! Here are some things to put in that retro Superfriends metal lunchbox:

Sandwich

Peanut butter *put PB on both slices, keeps the jelly from soaking through the bread

Turkey

Tuna *add lettuce, cheese, tomato, and pickles

Fresh fruit

Fresh vegetables

Yogurt

Cottage cheese, fruit

Hard boiled egg

Peanuts, raisins, choc. chip mix

Whole wheat crackers / with cheese

*no soda, sugar drinks

*for more calories, eat two sandwiches with sm. Amount of snacks rather than large amount of snacks

*packing a second small lunch is recommended for after school activities

Eat for energy. Most student athletes head straight from school to practice or a team training session. With lunch served as early as 10:30am, the gap between lunch and dinner could be 6-8 hours! As athletes we know that anything over four hours and our body is going to drop off! I see athletes everyday that come to train after school and try to train on empty tanks. With no fuel and low blood sugar they would rather take a nap than train to enhance performance. A simple fresh fruit snack or nutrition shake between 2-3:00pm will keep your blood sugar up and you will be more mentally sharp for practice and ready to go!



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Eating on the go

As athletes you are constantly on the move: practice, training, school, games, travel, skill sessions, social, etc. It is well known that 5-6 meals a day are vital for recovery and regeneration. Food can be tough to eat on the run so often athletes are looking for supplementation. First it must be said that a solid nutrition foundation is a must. No supplement will make or break our nutrition and recovery. The best approach is to plan out the day and create your food structure. Then figure out what type of food is best at each meal considering availability, activity, logistics, etc. There will be times when eating a bar or having a shake is the best option.

Hydration, hydration, hydration.

As the weather warms up athletes and parents begin to think about being thirsty and staying cool. Summer always brings a focus to hydration, which is great (although hydration is important all year). Here are some things to consider while hydrating:

- Staying properly hydrated is a 24 process. How you feel today depends on what you had yesterday!
- Entering an activity well hydrated is very important. Drinking water throughout the activity will keep hydration up but this is not the time to get caught up
- Water should be first choice
- Gatorade and sport specialty drinks are good, can be diluted
- No carbonated drinks
- Stay away from high sugar drinks