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OFFSEASON FUELING

I'm a sophomore student-athlete on the baseball team. After playing a full season, I feel as if my body composition has really changed. I've lost some muscle and picked up a few extra pounds.

What can I do during the offseason to optimize my body composition so I can be in top shape for next season?

GOALS OF OFFSEASON FUELING

- Compensate for the differences in lifestyle and training during the offseason by adjusting nutrient intake.
- Recognize that changes in body fat and weight may occur and be aware of appropriate changes.
- Create a balance between training volume and nutrient intake.

WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS?

With the grind of the season behind you, this is the perfect time to focus on your eating habits and make changes to your body composition. You can do this by picking a couple habits you'd like to improve during this time period — for example, focus on drinking more water, eating breakfast daily or avoiding fast food. It is important that you rest, recover and enjoy the down time, while also allowing yourself some flexibility with your eating, but remember to always keep your offseason training goals in mind.

(For information on fueling during the offseason, turn the page.)



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TIPS TO TAKE WITH YOU

- Focus more on eating “real” foods versus convenience foods (e.g., avoid bars and pre-packaged shakes), since you will have a little extra time for food preparation.
- Use this time to try new recipes and foods. You never know what you might discover — maybe some new fruits, vegetables or sources of lean protein that could benefit you during the season.



- Spend a few days logging your intake to learn about your daily habits. Do you always eat breakfast? Are you eating often enough? Is your intake tied to stress or emotions? You might be surprised at what you learn! There are plenty of apps available to help you track your food and fluid intake.
- Keep in mind that sleep is an important part of reaching your body composition goals. Make ample time for rest during the offseason.



WEIGHT GAIN

If you're looking to add some lean mass during the offseason, a realistic goal is about a half to one pound a week. Gaining weight too quickly can mean putting on unwanted body fat. When planning and preparing your meals, use these tips to help incorporate more quality calories into your diet to promote weight gain:

- Include beverages, such as low-fat milk or 100 percent juice, with all of your meals.
- Eat often — having a meal or snack every two to three hours can ensure you are getting adequate calories throughout the day.
- Add calorie-dense foods such as nuts and nut butters, granola, avocado, and olive oil; these foods can help increase calories with little increase in food volume.
- Use olive oil when preparing foods to add some additional calories from healthy fats.

WEIGHT LOSS

For weight loss during the offseason, focus on low-calorie, high-nutrient foods such as fruits, vegetables and lean proteins. Losing about one to two pounds per week is a realistic goal to strive for to avoid losing your lean mass. Keep in mind the following:

- Include lean protein at every meal and snack (e.g., lean meat, nuts, Greek yogurt, eggs, cottage cheese).
- Avoid drinking sugary beverages such as soft drinks, punches and energy drinks, as the calories can add up quickly.
- Continue to eat often, ideally every three to four hours. This will prevent you from becoming too hungry and overeating.
- Look to whole-grain foods, fruits and low-fat dairy products to fulfill your carbohydrate requirements.

Have your biggest meal at the beginning of the day. Taper your meal size as the day goes on to enable you to burn more calories during the more active part of your day.

WEIGHT MAINTENANCE

With a likely decrease in activity during the offseason, decreasing calories and carbohydrate intake are necessary to avoid unwanted weight gain. Remember to:

- Continue to eat often throughout the day, cutting back on portion sizes at meals.
- Avoid eating too many high-calorie extras such as creamy sauces, salad dressings and desserts.
- Reach for water and unsweetened beverages for hydration.
- Match your carbohydrate intake to your activity level. That means reducing your carbohydrate intake on an off-day as opposed to a high-intensity training day when you need more carbs for fuel and recovery.

