

HEALTHY SNACKING

Academics and athletics keep me busy. I eat breakfast, lunch and dinner, but I'm starving by the end of the day. I've also noticed that my body is often fatigued and my muscles remain sore longer than normal.

What can I do to increase my energy and improve my performance?

Healthy snacking is an important part of an athlete's diet. Snacking ensures adequate fuel for sport, improves muscle recovery, helps manage weight and boosts mental performance. Athletes should consume three meals and two to four snacks per day. The number and type of snacks are dictated by hunger in addition to academic, athletic and sleep schedules.

SIGNS OF HUNGER

An athlete's ability to recognize hunger signals is important. Most athletes identify hunger by stomach pangs, but once hunger pangs are felt, too many hours have passed without fuel. Common signs of hunger include fatigue, irritability, shakiness, headaches, poor concentration and sleep disturbances. Being able to determine your body's hunger cues is necessary to maximize your energy and ensure peak performance.

(To plan how to snack smart, turn the page.)

Information presented by





HEALTHY SNACKS VERSUS TREATS

It's important to distinguish a healthy snack from a treat. Healthy snacks are nutrient-rich and provide whole grains, fiber, lean proteins and/or healthy fats. Treats such as sweets, fried foods and chips lack nutrients and provide “empty” calories. Treats usually satisfy a craving, but they rarely satisfy hunger. Choosing treats instead of healthy snacks can slow fueling and muscle recovery. Remember: You are what you eat. Eating healthy, high-quality snacks is a key component to achieving your athletic potential.

SNACK SELECTION

Before selecting a snack, there are several factors to consider, including hunger level, time of day, pre- or post-workout, and weight goals. These factors dictate whether you choose a light, moderate or heavy snack (heavy snacks are also considered mini-meals).

Light snacks: Fresh fruit, raisins, dried fruit, frozen fruit, veggies, graham

crackers, dry cereal, pretzels, low-fat Greek yogurt, granola bar, dried edamame, low-fat pudding

Moderate snacks: Fruit with peanut butter, graham crackers with peanut butter, trail mix, sunflower seeds, oatmeal, cereal and milk, popcorn, low-fat string cheese, jerky, Greek yogurt parfait, fig/fruit bars, granola bars, veggies or pretzels and hummus, soup, yogurt smoothies, low-fat milk, low-fat chocolate milk

Heavy snacks: Sandwich/panini/wrap/bagel (with peanut butter and jelly, lean deli meat, grilled chicken or tuna), cheese and crackers, waffles, omelet

HEALTHY SNACKING HELPS ACHIEVE WEIGHT GOALS

Many athletes falsely believe snacking is bad. On the contrary, healthy snacking is vital to keep energy and metabolism steady throughout the day. Whether you are trying to maintain weight, lose weight or gain weight, having two to four healthy snacks per day is essential.

SMART SNACKING TIPS

- **Plan ahead.** Spend five minutes before bedtime preparing/packing snacks for the next day.
- **Establish a snack routine.** Consuming a meal or snack every two to three hours will help prevent feeling overhungry, achieve weight goals and ensure you have enough fuel for practice and recovery.
- **Distinguish snacks versus treats.** Healthy snacks are nutritious and satisfy hunger.
- **Keep snacks easily accessible.** Place portable, nonperishable snacks in your school bag, gym bag and/or locker for quick access to fuel when you need it.
- **Stick to your schedule.** There is always time for healthy snacks. In less than five minutes, you can eat a banana or drink a glass of low-fat chocolate milk.
- **Be money-wise.** Most healthy snacks are inexpensive. For example, bananas, raisins, granola bars and jerky all cost much less than energy bars.

PLANNING YOUR FOOD: A SAMPLE DAY

5:30 a.m.
Pre-morning practice snack:
fruit and/or granola bar

7:30 a.m.
Breakfast:
omelet, toast, Greek yogurt and fruit

10 a.m.
Midmorning snack:
low-fat string cheese and/or jerky

12:30 p.m.
Lunch:
turkey wrap, vegetables and hummus, baked chips and low-fat milk

3:30 p.m.
Midafternoon/pre-practice snack:
fig bar and/or fruit

6:30 p.m.
Dinner:
grilled chicken, rice, green beans, salad, dinner roll and low-fat milk

9 p.m.
Evening snack:
peanut butter, banana and honey sandwich on wheat bread and low-fat chocolate milk

