



Nutrition for Young Soccer Athletes Peek Performance - General Nutrition

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The Basics About Nutrition and Soccer

The amounts and types of food that players eat has an impact on not only their sporting performance but also on their growth and general health levels. This section is provided as a guide to help parents of players as well players themselves understand nutrition and its importance.

Soccer is a sport that requires both power and endurance. During training periods, an athlete's daily food and drink intake influences her ability to sustain energy, build muscle, and recover quickly. In order to perform at maximum capacity, an athlete needs the proper balance of carbohydrate, protein, fat, vitamins, minerals and fluids.

Food can be broken down into three macronutrients: carbohydrates, protein and fat. Total daily calorie needs range from 1,600 - 2,000). Training athletes should balance their daily calories by these percentages:

55%-65% Carbohydrates

12%-15% Protein

20%-30% Fat

Energy and Endurance

When training, athletes need to increase their daily calorie intake. Listen to your body as it is a good gauge, when you are hungry eat, when you are not don't eat. Energy and endurance come from an athlete's ability to store and utilize food in the form of dietary carbohydrates, fats and proteins. **Carbohydrates and fats are the primary suppliers of the energy.** Protein is spared from being used for energy so that it can focus on growth, repair and maintenance of muscles.

Daily Training Need

Weight (lbs)	Carbs (grams)	Protein (grams)
60	138-192	48-54
70	161-224	56-63
80	184-256	64-72
90	207-288	72-81
100	230-320	80-90
120	276-384	88-99
130	299-416	104-117
140	322-448	112-126
150	345-480	120-135

Example Food Choice	Carbs (grams)
1 slice whole wheat bread	13
1 med plain bagel	30
½ cup granola	32
2 cups pasta	80
1 medium banana	28
¼ cup raisins	33
1 medium orange	15
1 cup low fat milk	12
1 cup low fat fruit yogurt	32
Example Food Choice	Protein (grams)
¼ lb. beef burger	27
3 oz. beef steak	26
3 oz. chicken breast	25
½ can tuna	16
2 tbsp peanut butter	7
1 cup low fat milk	8
1 cup low fat fruit yogurt	7

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates are, by far the preferred energy source for athletes. Carbohydrates convert to glucose that is used to provide energy to muscles and the brain. Excess glucose is stored as glycogen in muscles and the liver and lastly as fat. Stored glycogen is the fuel burned during exercise. Fatigue is felt once glycogen stores have been depleted. Training increases the ability of an athlete's muscles to store glycogen. Well-trained athletes can endure longer because their muscles can store more glycogen or fuel.

General Training Needs Carbohydrate 2.5 – 4.0 grams / lb / day
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Quality "Carbs"

Foods rich in carbohydrates are: grains, beans, breads, fruits, starchy vegetables, dairy products and sweets. **Athletes should focus on nutrient dense carbohydrates such as whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables and low fat dairy products.** These foods not only supply carbohydrate but can also be a good source of vitamins, minerals, fiber and protein. Refined or processed foods and sweets generally have poor nutrient content and provide little more than carbohydrate calories.

Protein

Athletes are commonly mistaken about the role of protein. **Eating extra protein DOES NOT build extra muscle and may increase the risk of dehydration.** The primary role of protein is to build and repair muscle tissue, grow hair and fingernails, produce hormones, boost your immune system, and replace red blood cells. Athletes should consume adequate but not excessive protein daily. Excess protein is stored as fat and small amount of glycogen.

General Training Needs Protein 0.8 – 0.9 grams / lb / day

Quality Proteins

The most concentrated forms of protein come from animal sources in the form of meats, poultry, fish, and eggs. These are also good source of iron and zinc. Low-fat dairy foods are also excellent sources of protein as well as calcium. **High quality plant based sources of protein include soy produces, dried peas, beans and lentils.** Protein powders or supplements are expensive and not required if an athlete is eating a balance diet inclusive of protein sources.

Fats

Fat is an energy source and an important part of an athlete's diet. Fat provides energy, maintains body temperature and protects organs. In addition, dietary fats are the only source of essential fatty acids and carriers to transport fat-soluble vitamins and carotenoids.

Quality Fats

There are three main types of fat: 1) saturated, 2) monounsaturated and 3) polyunsaturated. Saturated fats, which include trans fats, have a negative effect on blood cholesterol and may increase the chances of developing heart disease. Saturated fats come from animal products such as