

# Training Diets for Athletes



Whether you are a professional or amateur athlete, competing on a team, or aiming for your personal best at your next marathon, what you eat and drink day to day will affect how well you can train.

## If you don't eat well you may:

- lack the energy to train hard and long enough
  - break down your body's lean tissue (muscle) for energy
  - lose bone strength
  - get sick or injured
- For a 165 pound (lb) athlete, this is at least 450 grams/day.
  - Divide 165 pounds by 2.2 lb/kg = 75 kg
  - Multiply 75 kg by 6 grams and you get 450 grams.

## Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide

Start with Canada's Food Guide as the foundation of your training diet ([www.myfoodguide.ca](http://www.myfoodguide.ca)). Because athletes burn a lot of energy, you may need to eat more servings than the food guide recommends.

## The Energy Superstars!

### Carbohydrate

**Why do we need it?** All athletes, from distance runners to body builders, need carbohydrate. It provides quick energy for your muscles and brain.

**How much?** Anywhere from 6 to 10 grams of carbohydrate per kg of your body weight per day (g/kg/day) during training and competition is needed.

### Protein

**Why do we need it?** Protein is needed by all athletes to help the body build and repair muscles and other tissues.

#### How much?

- Endurance athletes need about 1.2 to 1.4 grams of protein per kg of body weight per day (g/kg/day).
- Strength and power athletes need about 1.2 to 1.7 g/kg/day.
- For a 165 pound (75 kg) athlete, this is at least 90 grams/day.

### Fat

**Why do we need it?** Fat is essential in the diet for both health and performance. It provides much needed energy and helps your body absorb fat-soluble vitamins.

**How much?** Athletes need 20-35% of their calories from fat. Neither very high fat nor very low fat diets are recommended for athletes.

## Eating before and after exercise

Eat 1-4 hours *before* exercise for extra energy, fluid and to prevent hunger.

- Choose foods rich in carbohydrate with some protein and a little fat like a bagel with peanut butter or a small plate of pasta with cheese. Sip water!
- The longer the time between the meal and exercise, the more you can eat.
- On competition day, never try a new food or drink that you haven't tried first in training.

Carbohydrate and protein will help your muscles recover *after* exercise.

- If meal time is a few hours away, grab a snack like a big glass of chocolate milk with a banana.
- If you are training or competing again in less than 24 hours, try to eat within 30 minutes or so after exercise.

## Pulling it all together:

**Meet Patrick. He is a 75-kg varsity soccer athlete. Check out his 1-day food diary to see how easy it is to meet these needs for carbohydrate, protein and fat.**

- **Breakfast:** Boiled egg, whole grain toast with peanut butter and jam, a mango, glass of milk
- **During mid-morning practice:** 1L sports drink
- **Recovery snack:** Banana, whole grain pita with hummus, glass of cranberry juice
- **Lunch:** Large turkey submarine sandwich topped with veggies and oil and vinegar dressing, orange juice
- **During resistance and core training:** Water
- **Recovery snack:** Fruit smoothie (milk, yogurt, strawberries, blueberries, wheat germ, honey)
- **Dinner:** Garden salad topped with walnuts, shredded cheese and olive oil vinaigrette. Grilled salmon, rice, juice spritzer.
- **Evening snack:** Bowl of cereal with fortified soy beverage, topped with berries
- (Patrick also sipped water throughout the day)

### TOTALS:

- 3588 calories
- 120 grams protein (or 1.6 g/kg/day)
- 525 grams carbohydrate (or 7 g/kg/day)
- 112 grams fat (28% of calories from fat)