

Are You Winning at Sports Nutrition?



Test your nutrition knowledge by answering TRUE or FALSE to each of these seven skill testing statements.

1. *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide* does not apply to athletes.
 True or False
2. If you lose weight during a training session you have lost water, not fat.
 True or False
3. An athlete who is unusually tired during regular workouts may be iron deficient.
 True or False
4. Water is always the best drink for athletes during training and competitions.
 True or False
5. Vitamin and mineral supplements will give athletes more energy.
 True or False
6. High protein diets or whey protein and amino acid supplements are needed to produce bigger and stronger muscles.
 True or False
7. Meals should not be eaten before training or competitions because this will upset the stomach.
 True or False

How well did you score?

1. Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide does not apply to athletes.

FALSE – Athletes should use *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide* as the starting point for planning a training diet, regardless of the sport. The food guide recommends a healthy eating pattern from each of the four food groups – Vegetables and Fruit; Grain Products; Milk & Alternatives; and Meat & Alternatives which help meet nutrient needs. Most athletes need more food than the food guide recommends during training. Choose extra servings from each of the four food groups to help meet energy needs.

2. If you lose weight during a training session you have lost water, not fat.

TRUE – Athletes can lose a lot of water as sweat during a workout resulting in weight loss. This quick weight loss is not due to loss of fat. Athletes need to replace fluid/sweat losses in order to prevent dehydration. Dehydration will cause your performance to suffer. Follow these simple rules before, during and after competition to prevent dehydration:

- Always keep your personal water bottle handy and drink fluids before, during and after workouts or competitions.
- Keep track of your body fluid level by weighing yourself

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before and after your workout. (Weigh yourself nude – sweaty clothes will give you a false reading!) For every kilogram of weight lost, drink 1-1½ litres of fluid. Eating meals and snacks with beverages after exercise will help replace fluid and electrolytes (minerals) that were lost during sweating.

- Avoid dehydration! Keep track of the colour and amount of your urine. If you are producing plenty of light coloured urine you are doing well. Small amounts of dark, concentrated urine can be a sign of dehydration.

3. An athlete who is unusually tired during regular workouts may be iron deficient.

TRUE – Iron is an important nutrient for carrying oxygen in the blood stream to working cells. If you are low in iron, your working muscles don't get the oxygen they need to work hard. Fatigue is a common symptom of low iron stores. Iron deficiency may result from too little iron in your diet and is seen more often among female than male athletes. Ask a Registered Dietitian to assess your diet for iron content and, if necessary, to provide advice on increasing your intake of high iron foods. See your family doctor or Sports Medicine Physician to check for iron deficiency anemia.

4. Water is always the best drink for athletes during training and competitions.

FALSE – Cool water is a *must* for athletes. But other fluids such as sports drinks can be beneficial when exercise is prolonged or intense because they contain carbohydrate and electrolytes (minerals like sodium and potassium). If fruit juice is consumed *during* exercising it **SHOULD** be diluted (one part juice to one part water). During hot, humid conditions and prolonged or intense exercise, the body needs more fluids to replace sweat losses and prevent heat illness.

5. Vitamin and mineral supplements will give athletes more energy.

FALSE – Vitamins and minerals themselves do not provide energy. They help release energy from the carbohydrate, protein and fat found in food. A well balanced eating pattern with food from all four food groups provides energy and vitamins and minerals needed to fuel your active lifestyle. High doses of some vitamin and mineral supplements can be harmful. Talk to a Registered Dietitian or physician about any supplements you are taking.

6. High protein diets or whey protein and amino acid supplements are needed to produce bigger and stronger muscles.

FALSE – While slightly more protein may help, a proper strength-training program, along with adequate energy/calorie intake, recovery time and sleep, is key. Use of whey protein and amino acid supplements can be expensive and offer no advantage over a diet providing adequate calories and protein from milk, meat, fish, chicken, legumes, soy products, nuts and seeds. Excess amounts of amino acid supplements are generally not recommended and can be dangerous.

7. Meals should not be eaten before training or competition because this will upset the stomach.

FALSE – A pre-event meal is important to provide extra fuel for exercise and to delay or prevent hunger. It should be high in carbohydrate, low to moderate in protein and lower in fat. At least 2-3 hours before the event, drink fluids and eat foods that are familiar, easy to digest and not too high in fibre, spices or fats. Larger meals can be consumed when there is more time before exercise. Never experiment with new foods or beverages during competition. Try new foods in training first.