

ENERGY EDGE NUTRITION

Real Nutrition Plans: Real Results For Athletes

I think we are all well aware that nutrition plays a key role in our life. The key is to form lasting habits or behaviors in all areas of life in order to achieve optimal health, body composition and exercise or athletic performance. Unfortunately there are no quick fixes when it comes to weight loss and toning. The good news is that no one is at a loss! We need to look at nutrition as a tool to help us achieve our goals. This means that you need to know what to eat, how much to eat and when to eat. Poor nutrition can lead to a lack of energy, poor concentration, loss of sleep, mood swings, depression, health concerns/illness, weight loss/gain and poor self esteem: poor performance! Nutrition along with regular physical activity plays a major role in improving quality of life. I was once told that success in nutrition is the same as success in school – 90% is an A and you can't get much better than that! What does this mean? What we want to do is eat as recommended 90% of the time; and include "10% meals" that you can indulge in and look forward to. Here is the math: if you eat 6 meals/day x 7 days/week = 42 meals/week. 90% of 42 is about 37 meals per week that are balanced and healthy. This leaves 5 meals that would fall into the "10%" rule. To achieve your goals you have to have a plan of action and set standards. It isn't an all or nothing approach.

Two main factors contribute to optimal performance and affect your potential for success: body weight and body composition. Body weight influences speed, endurance and power. Body composition affects strength, agility and appearance. Nutrition and physical activity together help us achieve our goals for body weight and body composition. If it is your thighs you want to improve upon, you need both nutrition and physical activity. There is no miracle food that will change your body composition or improve your performance. Our main sources of fuel are carbohydrate, protein and fat. These macronutrients help fuel our body and are necessary for survival. Carbohydrate is designed to be broken down into sugar and used for power and energy and is our brains preferred fuel source. Protein is required for building, healing and repairing muscle tissue. Both nutrients are important components in the recovery process. Fat is needed to reduce hunger, enhance flavor and help with absorption of vital nutrients (vitamins A, D, E). All three macronutrients are needed whether you want to shed a few pounds, tone up or bulk up. The point is, you need to eat! You need energy to burn energy. Eating well is a balancing act, but with purposeful planning and a stick to it mind-set, your goal is achievable!

The following are 10 habits to enhance your workout performance, body composition and over all health:

- Eat every 2-3 hours and consume between 5 to 8 meals
- Consume lean, complete protein every time you eat
- Incorporate vegetables into every meal
 - Provide fibre for fullness and promotes regularity
 - Antioxidants and phyto-nutrients prevent cell damage and promote optimal health
 - Balance acid-base status in the body which prevents calcium from being leached from bones and glutamine from muscles
- Always remember to hydrate before, during and after working out
- Daily fat should make up 25% to 35% of energy intake
- Ditch the calorie containing drinks; water lubricates the joints, helps muscle tone, and enhances concentration and physical performance
- Focus on whole foods
- Have 10% foods as part of your meal plan
- Develop preparation strategies; and plan for the unplanned

- Think about each day and realize where the challenges will be
- Face challenges without lowering your nutrition standards
- Prepare meals in advance or have a strategy for having meals ready when it's time to eat. The following are not excuses when you take the time to plan:
 - Waking up late/working late
 - Unexpected obligations/deadlines
 - Dinner parties, lunch dates
 - emergencies
- Balance daily routine with healthy variety

It seems everyone has "the ultimate" program. What I believe is important is that people find out what works for them. If working out first thing in the morning works best for you, then do it. If working out in the afternoon or in the evening is best for your schedule, then do it! Your daily activities guide when, where and what you eat. The following are guidelines that may help you achieve optimal performance in your workout; keeping in mind that what one person tolerates may not be tolerated by someone else. You will have to go through the trial and error process until you find what works best for you. There is no food that targets one area of the body. In order to achieve optimal changes in body composition you need to consume the right foods and the right time. Eating right alone will not change body composition. It is important to have a well planned fitness program. Eating well will enhance your workout performance which will help you achieve your goal(s).

You don't have to avoid any foods altogether. However, you want to consume a balanced meal plan most of the time (90% rule). We need carbs, we need protein and we need fat. But what we also need is to eat the right carbs, protein and fat at the right time and in the right amounts. Everyone has a different workout schedule/routine. It is your personal workout plan that determines what, when and where you eat. Carbs that are beneficial to a healthy diet include whole grains, oatmeal, wild rice, quinoa, vegetables and fruit. Power proteins can include lean meat, poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, low fat dairy products, nuts/seeds and legumes. Healthy fats and oils include olive or canola oil, salmon/fish oils, omega 3. Limit the amount of saturated fats which are found in animal products. Trans fats or hydrogenated fats should be consumed as little as possible as they are linked to heart disease. These fats are found in baked goods (crackers, cookies, muffins) and some margarines. Be proactive and read food labels!!! It is also important to consider portion sizes. If you eat out often you may be consuming more than you realize. Avoid over-eating by preparing your own meals or asking for smaller portions or tell yourself you don't have to eat the entire meal in one sitting. You can take leftovers home for a later meal!

Eating For High Energy Performance Strategy:

- Consume fluids before, during and after your workout. Plain water is enough if your workout is an hour or less. A sport drink may be of benefit for activities lasting longer than an hour. A general rule is to consume at least 2 L of water daily, additional fluid with extra activity. Two to three hours before exercise 400 to 600 ml of fluid should be consumed. During your workout drink enough fluid to maintain a fluid balance; 150 to 350 ml at 15 to 20 minute intervals. 1.5 L of fluid should be consumed for each kg of weight loss or 3 cups for each pound. Remember that tolerance is also key and fluid needs can be quite individual depending on climate/room temperature/humidity, sweat loss and hydration status prior to working out.
- The pre-exercise meal should generally be low in fat and fibre and include only familiar foods to help decrease chances of gastrointestinal distress (GI) and increase gastric emptying. The meal should be higher in carbs and a moderate amount of protein to maintain blood sugar levels and maximize glycogen

stores. You may want to choose smaller amounts of familiar foods if there is less than 2 to 3 hours before the event.

- During exercise carb intake should occur shortly after onset of activity (15 to 20 minute intervals during the first 2 hours of activity), usually in a fluid form as it is generally better tolerated. Fluids are essential for high energy performance. Too often people forget to fuel and hydrate their body during physical activity.
- The post-exercise meal plan should include carbohydrate, protein and amino acids. All of these come from foods we eat. Within the first 15 to 20 minutes post-exercise a high carb drink/food should be consumed. A carbohydrate snack should be consumed within 2-4 hours. Some protein with this snack has been thought to help with recovery (banana and protein powder smoothie, beans and rice, 1-2 slices turkey on a bagel)

Summary:

- Both a balanced diet and physical activity are needed to achieve optimal weight/body composition
- Depending on your daily schedule and training needs, it is usually best to front load your daily food intake (have a big breakfast rather than a big supper)
- Eat when your body needs fuel, not when you are bored, stressed or lonely
- Consume 5 to 8 meals a day and try to eat every 3 hours
- Know appropriate portion sizes; more frequent meals means eating smaller portions more often
- Always fill up on vegetables and fruit throughout the day
- Eat slowly, decrease distractions and pay attention to what you are eating
- Keep a list of what you are eating and a list of nonfood activities
- Make a realistic eating plan; the key is to “plan” for the unplanned
- Think fit and healthy