



This brochure has been created in conjunction with a qualified clinical nutritionist. For more menu ideas, or to simply learn more about healthy eating, visit Virginnia at Nourishing Pantry.

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Oral Health &
Healthy Eating
for **ATHLETES**



ATHLETES

Eating a balanced diet made up of vegetables, protein, grains, fruit, good fats and adequate water is vital when training. It helps you perform optimally, improves recovery, reduces the risk of injury and increases your energy levels. The exact number of calories, carbohydrates, protein and specific nutrients will depend on the intensity and type of training being undertaken. (Speak to your trainer or nutritionist for more detailed advice.)

What should your meal look like?

Focus on consuming vegetables and protein with every meal. Enjoy up to 2 pieces of fruit a day. Vegetables should take up 1/2 of your plate with the other 1/4 protein from meat, eggs, legumes, tofu or fish and the final 1/4 a carbohydrate such as brown rice, sweet potato or wholegrain bread. Eat fish at least twice a week and vegetarian once a week. Your body needs leafy greens such as spinach, kale, and rocket. Add in vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower, leeks and onions to assist with detoxification.

HEALTHY FATS are essential for brain function, reducing inflammation and keeping skin plump. They also make you feel satisfied and keep you full for longer. Good fats include those found in full fat dairy products such as milk, yoghurt and butter, omega 3 fats from fish, flaxseed, chia seeds and walnuts. Nuts add crunch to a meal and nut oils create an interesting dressing. Avocado contains an amazing array of phytonutrients, as well as good fats and oleic acid. They are a good source of pantothenic acid, dietary fibre, vitamin K, copper, folate, vitamin B6, potassium, vitamin E, and vitamin C. Enhance calcium uptake by eating calcium-rich foods like dairy, tinned salmon bones, leafy greens, almonds and sesame seeds.

PROTEIN intake of 1.4 – 2.0 g/kg/day is the recommended daily intake for athletes. It's often reported by popular media that a high protein intake is unhealthy and may put strain on the kidneys. However, studies show that protein included as part of a balanced, nutrient-dense diet, is not detrimental to kidney function or bone metabolism in otherwise healthy, active people.

CARBOHYDRATES should be eaten with protein at a ratio of 4:1 immediately after exercise, as the carbohydrate intake stimulates an increase in the hormone insulin, which in turn, stimulates the muscle to take up the amino acids.

Which foods should be avoided or limited?

- ▶ Excess sugar (limit to 10% of your daily calories, or 7-9 tsp per day)
- ▶ Processed foods (including protein bars, powders and shakes)
- ▶ Sports drinks, carbonated beverages and energy drinks
- ▶ Harmful fats (trans fats, hydrogenated fats, margarine, and canola oil)
- ▶ Limit fruit to 2 pieces per day, as part of a meal instead of a snack
- ▶ Acidic foods like lemon, vinegar and sodas (including diet soda)
- ▶ Nuts make a healthy snack, but excess consumption can damage your teeth and block the absorption of other nutrients



What about HYDRATION?

We all know how important it is to stay hydrated when exercising to avoid fatigue. Among other things dehydration increases the risk of dental erosion due to the decrease in salivary flow resulting in inadequate rinsing and buffering of demineralizing acids on tooth surfaces.

Most energy and sports drinks contain the equivalent of 3 to 8 teaspoons of sugar per serving. Frequent sipping on sports drinks, energy drinks, fruit juice and carbonated beverages can massively impact dental health due to high sugar and acid content, as well as the constant exposure. Unusual drinking habits (e.g., swishing or holding acidic liquids in the mouth for prolonged periods) have been linked to erosion. Never rinse a mouth guard in anything except water.

What are the alternatives?

Plain old water. Add a pinch of a salt high in minerals such as Himalayan sea salt or Celtic sea salt to replace electrolytes if exercising in hot weather, high intensity or for long periods.

Coconut water has a great electrolyte profile, is very hydrating, has no added sugar and contains lower acid levels than sports drinks or many carbonated beverages. It's also packed with potassium, which supports optimal muscle and nerve function.

→ See insert for snack ideas and more tips

Other things to consider...

Chewing sugar-free gum helps stimulates the production of saliva, washing away acids produced by the bacteria in your mouth, and it also bathes the teeth in bone-strengthening calcium and phosphate. In addition, many varieties of sugarless gum are sweetened with xylitol, an alcohol that reduces bacteria.

Protein powders and bars by their nature are a highly processed "food," with many essential parts left out of the end product. Moreover, many are packed with artificial sweeteners, colours, emulsifiers and fillers. Although they can be convenient and an efficient way to increase protein intake, choose carefully.

Vitamin D levels are important, as this vitamin maintains normal calcium metabolism. Spend up to 15 minutes soaking up the sun at least twice a week.

